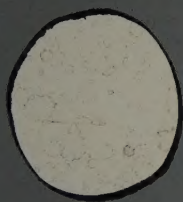


Shodo Harada Roshi

Morning  
Dewdrops  
of the  
Mind



Teachings of a Contemporary Zen Master



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of the  
Mind





# Morning Dewdrops of the Mind

Teachings of a  
Contemporary  
Zen Master

Shodo Harada Roshi

Translated by

Daichi-Priscilla Storandt

Edited by

Roy Tribelhorn and Eunice Nakao



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# Introduction

Roy Tribelhorn

In 1988 Shodo Harada Roshi, abbot of Sogenji, a Rinzai Zen temple in Okayama, Japan, began writing a newsletter "for the purpose of entering the lives of those who have experienced living a life of training at Sogenji and since gone home to their own countries and lives." He started it with the hope that it would support and encourage its readers to keep alive what they were able to discover in their experience at Sogenji.

Harada Roshi's writings have been coming forth regularly since then. Knowing that there are great differences in each person's life and personality, knowing that there are those who can keep their monastic experience alive easily and those for whom it is more difficult, Roshi's desire is to have his newsletter serve as a message, a reminder. His wish is to have his students "occasionally" read the newsletter, "hear its message and glean from it how to live one's life of practice while being in the midst of society."

Contained in the following pages and being made available to the general public for the first time, are some of Harada Roshi's newsletter writings. These are the teachings of a modern day *Rinzai Zen Master*. They include comments on contemporary issues and events, revealing how they are viewed from the perspective of a contemporary Zen Master. These teachings keenly—sharply—blend issues of living in today's world with the teachings of the Buddha.

Harada Roshi's writings are delightful, poignant, thought-provoking and inspiring, always encouraging us to open to our

## MORNING DEWDROPS OF THE MIND

clear, true, original mind. It is Roshi's hope that in reading his message we will find some meaning, and that the work will be useful for helping us deal with the challenges in our daily life. He hopes for everyone that his writings "will be useful in helping their practice grow" while "becoming alive in their daily world."

Read the pages that follow in the spirit of absorbing the essence of Harada Roshi's teachings. Read them as though you were present with Roshi, hearing him as he speaks directly to you. Open to the big picture of his teachings, sensing and feeling his message. In this way, make his teachings a part of you and carry them into your everyday life.

# Shodo Harada Roshi

Daichi-Priscilla Storandt

Shodo Harada is the *roshi* of Sogenji, a Zen temple in Okayama, Japan. He is the *Dharma* heir of Yamada Mumon Roshi of the *Inzan* line of the *Rinzai* sect of Zen Buddhism. He trained with Mumon Roshi for twenty years at Shofukuji Monastery in Kobe before becoming abbot of Sogenji in 1982.

Yamada Mumon Roshi (1900–1988) was one of the great *Rinzai* masters of the twentieth century. He was known for his breadth and for seriously and sincerely teaching lay people as well as ordained monks. His teachings were for everyone: monks, lay people, and men and women of every nationality. His teaching was simple and direct *mahayana* Buddhism. He taught that all beings are from the origin endowed with a clear, pure nature. His main themes were: forget your small self, see directly into your true nature, and with that clarity and wisdom give everything to the liberation of all beings.

Harada Roshi has continued that same breadth and activity and Sogenji is the very energetic expression of them. It is a training monastery where ordained and nonordained men and women of all ages and all nationalities do traditional *Rinzai* Zen training. Harada Roshi's practice and teaching are very practical and very big. He emphasizes creative and inventive participation in every moment in a real way, inspired by the deep breathing (*su-sokan*) and compassionate mind that frees us to be this way.

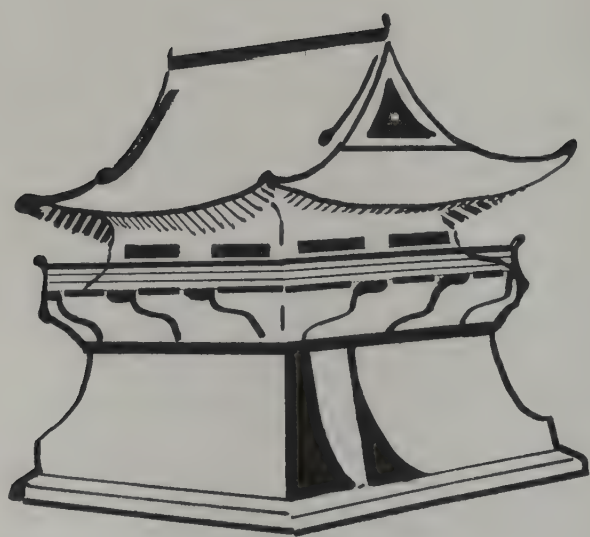
In September 1893, Shaku Soen gave the first official Zen teaching in the West at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago. Shaku Soen trained as a monk at Sogenji and from this

## MORNING DEWDROPS OF THE MIND

same monastery Harada Roshi continues what Shaku Soen began. Every year Harada Roshi goes to the United States to lead a *sesshin* at Cloud Mountain Retreat Center in Washington State and give *Dharma* talks in the Northwest. Also, under his guidance, several groups of people who have sat regularly with him have formed *zazen* groups to continue the practice he teaches. Some people have also visited Sogenji to get a sense of the essence of his teachings in a monastic setting. The dynamic offering of the possibility of realizing our true nature, which all of us have, is what Harada Roshi is doing in every minute of his life, in everything he does. This is what he offers to everyone, everywhere.

**Morning  
Dewdrops  
of the  
Mind**





# Sogen's One Drop of Water

January 1988

In 1982, at the direction of my teacher Yamada Mumon Roshi, I came to Sogenji in order to protect the temple and be its caretaker, with the hopes of making it even the slightest bit more beautiful while returning it to its original function as a training *dojo*.

Over the years these hopes have been realized in one clear, straight line. Mumon Roshi said, "Since Sogenji is so big, you'll need ten people, at least ten people are needed for taking care of a place as big as Sogenji." Just as he said, today between fifteen and sixteen members are taking care of and protecting Sogenji.

Over the last five years, there have been many people who have come to Sogenji, done training, and then gone on. In five years' time over one hundred people have trained at Sogenji.

Sogenji, located in western Japan in the city of Okayama, was built over three hundred years ago by the feudal lord of the Ikeda clan, the *daimyo* of Bizen. (Bizen is the old name for the Okayama Prefecture area.) About two hundred years ago it became a *dojo* under Taigen Gisan Zenji and people came to train at Sogenji from all over Japan. The tradition of training established at Sogenji came to be called the Bizen School.

Many great teachers followed from the training and teaching at Sogenji. Among them were:

- Ekei Shuhen, founder of Myoshinji's training monastery.
- Ogino Dokuon, founder of Shokokuji.

- Imakita Kosen who later went to Enkakujji in Kamakura.
- Gisan Zenrai Zenji, founder of the *dojo* Nanshuji in Sakai and abbot of Sogenji.
- Tekisui Giboku, reviver of the Tenryuji *dojo* and later abbot of Tenryuji.

Another monk, well known in the West, who trained at Sogenji was Shaku Soen. After training at Sogenji Shaku Soen eventually became the abbot of Enkakujji, in Kamakura. He was the first Japanese to officially take Buddhism abroad. It began with the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 in which Shaku Soen participated with his disciple and translator, D.T. Suzuki. Dr. Suzuki is the well-known author of many books on Buddhism in English and translations from Japanese, which have helped provide a guiding light on the basis of Zen.

Two other well-known monks in the West who trained at Sogenji were Gisan Zenrai Zenji and Tekisui Giboku. Gisan Zenrai Zenji came to Sogenji from faraway Fukui Prefecture, in the north by the Sea of Japan. He was from a very poor village without even a river. In this village, situated at the end of a peninsula, the villagers were completely isolated. It was almost impossible to get to the larger town, and therefore there was almost no exchange with other places. Since there was no river, villagers would collect the drops of rain water, which came down the drains at the corners of the roofs, in big containers. They then made rice with this water, washed dishes with it, cleaned the floors, watered the garden, and grew the vegetables with it. This precious water would be used over and over—one bucket of the same water used again and again.

This is the kind of town and environment in which Gisan Zenrai Zenji was raised. Gisan Zenrai Zenji, raised in this poor town, always thought only about how much he wanted to do training. With only this one single thought he was always worrying because he had no money but wanted desperately to do Zen practice, to open his true mind. He wanted only to awaken. One day he found someone's discarded straw sandals and, putting

them on, he walked far, traveling to Okayama Prefecture to practice at Sogenji. Gisan Zenrai Zenji did very strict training at Sogenji and later carried on the *Dharma* transmission of his master, Taigen Gisan Zenji, becoming his successor and later the abbot of Sogenji.

During the training under Gisan Zenrai Zenji there were always between seventy and one hundred or more monks at any one time at Sogenji from all over Japan. In search of a true teacher, they gathered and practiced a continually keen and cutting training in the very *zendo* in which practitioners sit today. This *zendo* was built by Taigen Gisan Zenji, and was, of course, the same place where Gisan Zenrai Zenji sat, putting his life on the line in his earnest training.

Tekisui Giboku, later abbot of Tenryuji, is known to the West through the story "Sogen's One Drop of Water." As the story goes, one day Gisan Zenrai Zenji (Tekisui's teacher) was about to take a bath, in the very same bath which is still used today at Sogenji. The water became overheated and way too hot to get into. Gisan Zenrai Zenji called his attendant and ordered him to go and get some cold water from the well by the back gate of Sogenji. From that well his disciple brought the water to put in the bath, and after many trips back and forth carrying water, Gisan Zenrai Zenji, his teacher, finally said that it was enough, that the temperature was just right and stopped him from bringing more. Having been told this, the monk took the little bit of water left in the bottom of the bucket, threw it away nearby and placed the bucket upside down. Seeing him do this, Gisan Zenrai Zenji yelled, "You idiot! You just threw away that little bit of water on the ground and turned over that bucket!" Gisan Zenrai Zenji continued: "At the moment you did that you were only thinking of that as just a little bit of water and were therefore carelessly throwing it away, weren't you? Why didn't you go just one step further, especially knowing that this is the time of the year when there's never enough rain? Why didn't you put it on the garden's trees or flowers? If you had put it on the tree it

would have become the very life of that tree! If you had put it on the flowers it would have become the very life of the flowers and lived on. Why do you begrudge such a small effort as that?"

With these scathing words he severely reprimanded his disciple. Continuing, he said, "In even one drop of water, no matter how tiny a drop, the water's great value doesn't change at all! If you can't understand this value of one single drop of water, no matter how hard you train you'll never become someone who can give life to that training."

Gisan Zenrai Zenji had always lived on the few drops of water provided by the rain. Seeing this precious water being wasted in front of his own eyes, for him, having come from that background, there is no doubt that water was so precious that he felt that his very own life was being discarded right in front of him. If we look at it carefully, he didn't get so unreasonably angry: it was his own life energy, his very way of living being discarded in front of him.

The monk received his teacher's admonition. For him, this was a most moving lesson which struck him deeply and echoed within. He changed his name to Tekisui, which means "one drop of water," and went on to complete his training. This is the reason Tekisui was able to realize his deepest enlightenment in the one expression "Sogen's One Drop of Water."

Later Tekisui went from Sogenji to Tenryuji where he became the abbot and raised many disciples and did much for Buddhism. Tekisui Zenji lived at a time when Japan was in great political upheaval. Tenryuji was in the very middle of this and was burned down while Tekisui was abbot. The temple was burned down completely, but by doing *takuhatsu* (gathering of alms), Tekisui raised the money to rebuild the temple and bring it back to life.

At that time the religion of Buddhism—which had supported the country of Japan for so long—was being rejected by the government. Buddhism became intrinsically involved in the tumultuous changes in the political situation to the point where even its continuing existence became threatened. At this pre-



*Sogen's One Drop of Water*

carious time, Tekisui and his disciples pleaded with the Emperor Meiji to allow Buddhism to continue in Japan, and declared that the very Buddhism which had given birth to all of Japanese culture up to that time mustn't be allowed to perish. Through their great efforts their goal was accomplished, and Buddhism was allowed to continue in Japan.

At Sogenji, Tekisui was taught the value of one drop of water and, although he used its teaching throughout his life of seventy-four years, it was never exhausted. This teaching, as insignificant as it might seem, has great meaning when expressed with one's whole total energy to help all people in society and all those who feel Buddhism is so necessary. For these people he had used this and worked it fully, expressing this meaning in his last poem:

Sogen's one drop of water  
For seventy-four years  
Used fully, never depleted  
Traversing heavens, earth  
and all ten directions.

曹源一滴



# Complete Combustion

January 1989

During this past year many people of practice have called on us at Sogenji and left and gone on as well. In the same year we have also had to say farewell to our beloved teacher, Mumon Roshi, Tsusendo Rodaishi. Mumon Roshi, my teacher, the very roots of this *dojo* of Sogenji, passed away on the twenty-fourth of December 1988 at the age of eighty-eight.

If we think in terms of his caring, compassion, and love, the fact that we can't ever see Mumon Roshi again is a very, very lonely thought, and this sad loneliness cannot be negated. Called the Hakuin of the Showa era, he was born in 1900 in the middle of Japan, in a small village two hours from Nagoya, far in the mountains. Even when he was very young he was considered to be a gifted child. As he grew he wrote many poems, and his way of thinking was truly that of a gifted child of unusual literary capability. His parents had great expectations of him.

He went to Tokyo to fulfill these expectations with the intention of becoming a lawyer. He began at Waseda Junior High School, a very famous school, but during his time as a student, this young man who thought deeply about everything suddenly found himself immersed in doubt, thinking as follows:

A lawyer is someone who should bring justice to the problems of the world, to have a correct view, and to correct the difficult problems of the world. This is what a lawyer should do. But, if you look at it very closely, to be without

these problems in this world is in fact the true ideal. Because things are inharmonious and imbalanced we need these lawyers. To build a world without these problems is the ultimate, ideal goal. This life which we can live only one time, not twice—should we only live it for that half-fulfilled goal, for that which is not the complete ideal?

This is how he began to reconsider becoming a lawyer as his goal in life. He asked, in this life through which we can only walk once, not twice, what is its truly most important goal, what is the best possible path?

Mumon Roshi began a deep questioning and his studies were left behind. If he had decided to become a lawyer he could have studied towards it with his whole heart, but Mumon Roshi was looking for the ultimate path to truth and wondering where to find it.

So, of course, he was facing a difficult dilemma about how to live his life at that time. He thought, to become a splendid lawyer one can perform many functions where you do not lose to anyone else. But to make a world that has no battles, no fights going on, isn't that the true way to go about it?

Once he started thinking in this way, during his studies, during his classroom hours, under his desk he would read the Buddhist text of Shinran Shonin, the *Tannisho*, instead of listening to the teacher. Always asking:

What is the truth of life, what is its true goal?

Always absorbed in these thoughts, he wasn't able to graduate to the next class. His friends, one after the other, were passing on to the upper classes, successful in their studies, but Mumon Roshi could not find his way out of this doubt and dilemma. His mind was always dark and heavy.

At that time he went to see many different teachers in Tokyo, and among them was Ekai Kawaguchi who was the first Japanese person to enter Tibet. This man, Ekai Kawaguchi Roshi, entered Tibet when it was prohibited for foreigners to enter, disguising himself as a Chinese monk and entering illegally. The

fundamental teachings of *mahayana* Buddhism were to be found in Tibet, and for that he went there. He brought home from Tibet what is called the teaching of the *bodhisattva*. Ekai Kawaguchi Roshi always talked and gave lectures on this way of the *bodhisattva*. Mumon Roshi heard these lectures and in them was one lesson which impressed him the most:

To try to make the whole world truthful would be like trying to cover the whole world with soft leather. Imagine how much soft leather we would need, but how easy it would then be to walk around the whole world. That is impossible, of course. However, if on our own two feet we wear a pair of soft leather shoes, then it is the same as if the whole world were covered with soft leather.

To make a roof which covers the whole world would be impossible. If we had a roof we would never get wet even if it rained. But if we all put up our umbrellas it would be the same as if there were a roof wherever we went.

In this way, for the world to become totally peaceful at one time, to try and make the whole world peaceful, as the ideal in one's life, is impossible. No matter how many decades and thousands of years we wait, this totally peaceful world will not come about.

However, if from within our own deep mind, that mind of no disturbance and delusion, that mind with clarity and freedom, we are awakened to that mind, then all of society becomes that ideal society. If within each of us that ideal mind is realized, the Buddha nature from within each of us, free from delusion, is the same thing as this whole world becoming peaceful. It is the source of the peace of the whole world.

All of us must first realize our Buddha nature, give great illumination to that Buddha nature and with it bring light to all of society. If every single person, one after another, receives this Buddha nature, then that brilliance will fill all of society, eventually to every single corner.

In this way Ekai Kawaguchi Roshi taught the *bodhisattva* way, and Mumon Roshi was convinced that this was his true path as well. He expressed it this way: "This is the ultimate goal of life,



this is the true way for me."

Mumon Roshi was able to discover his true path for the first time, and from that time he entered the *dojo* of Ekai Kawaguchi Roshi and did severe, strict training. Since he was a devoted *roshi*, Ekai Kawaguchi was very strict in observing the precepts, and the life at his *dojo* was very rigorous. There was, of course, not any meat or fish eaten at all, and no meals after noontime. The food before noon was of a low quality: oats which had not yet been hulled were boiled and then *miso* was added to this. Vegetables were eaten only once a day in the morning.

Ekai Kawaguchi Roshi had been living this kind of life for a long time and Mumon Roshi, following the same kind of life at the peak of his physical growth was, of course, not able to stay healthy. He already had a very weak body, and finally in this austere lifestyle, he became sick with tuberculosis. His older brother had tuberculosis as well. They went to the biggest hospital in Nagoya. The doctors said that his brother could be helped, they would treat him, but that it was too late to help Mumon Roshi. They said that from then on he should be allowed to do whatever he wanted because his life would soon be over. In this way he was given up on by the doctors.

Mumon Roshi, given only a short time to live, was forced to live all by himself. That sounds a little strange, perhaps, but his brother was sick with tuberculosis in the hospital and his mother was taking care of him, so Mumon Roshi was left to live in a detached part of his family's house.

Now there are new medicines developed for tuberculosis, and now it is hardly even considered a serious illness anymore, but in the old days someone who had tuberculosis was thought of as being certain to die because there was no cure or medicine.

As it was easily contagious people did not want to go near him. When they brought him his meals they would leave them at the door and go right away. For a long, long time he was left by himself in a separate area, away from everybody else. Mumon Roshi often said: "When people get physically sick, their minds

get sick as well." He felt at that time that everybody was just waiting for him to die. He felt, "I'm just something useless, unnecessary. Nobody wants me around." He fell into this dark state of mind thinking, "If only I weren't here this house wouldn't have this heavy, heavy feeling. Everybody is only waiting for me to die and get out of here."

This very lonely, painful mind was what he lived with everyday. Within this painful, miserable life, one day when he was feeling a little better than usual he opened the screens of the room to let in a little bit of breeze. In the garden there were some *nanten* flowers blooming, and those flowers were being moved by the breeze. "Watching these moving flowers he thought about the breeze. What is it, this breeze? It is air, and that air is moving." With that thought, deeply and suddenly it was as if his head had been struck with an iron bar. He often described it this way. At that moment he was awakened, for the first time, to the existence of a great, great power. Until that time he had thought only that he was a useless human being, and that everyone was waiting for his death. That was all he could think, staying lonely in a world of solitude. Finally he realized that he hadn't been alone, hadn't been in solitude. There was a great, great energy embracing him and living through him. It would be impossible for us only to go as far as to say it was just a breeze or merely air.

Now he knew that he had always been given breath from that air and been given life by it. He realized it was true for the sun and the water, all the things of heaven and earth. He had been receiving all the blessings of heaven and earth from that great energy which embraced him always. He hadn't been alone. Realizing heaven and earth were supporting him, giving him life, and that he was not alone, his mind became truly bright and light again. At that time he wrote this poem:

All things are embraced  
Within the universal mind,  
Told by the cool wind  
This morning.

One day soon after that the old woman who was taking care of him told him that he should try the treatment of loquat leaves. She said, "If you go to see the priest who heals with loquat leaves you'd get better right away." Mumon Roshi just laughed. "Loquat leaves," he said, "To be cured with loquat leaves? That's ridiculous. Of course that priest is a fake; that's not possible." He laughed at her idea. The grandmother said, "Yes, but if I do take you there that man will probably get angry at me." That interested Mumon Roshi. He asked, "That priest gets angry?" And the grandmother said, "That's right, if I bring new patients he says to me 'What are you doing such unnecessary things for?'"

To Mumon Roshi that was very interesting, and he thought, "If the priest were a fake he would be glad if a lot of patients came. There is something here that smells of the truth. There must be something real about him if that is the case." He said to the grandmother, "Please take me there."

In that way the grandmother was able to take him to see the priest of Konchi-in in Hamamatsu to the north of Lake Hama near Mt. Fuji, who was curing people with loquat leaves. When Mumon Roshi went in front of him, the priest looked at Mumon Roshi very, very closely. He put up three fingers and said, "It's for you." Mumon Roshi had no idea what he was talking about, he just had a vague look on his face and was silent. The priest hit him on the head and said, "Say thank you! I'm telling you, you will be cured in three months! I can cure you in three months. You have very strong organs. Because your organs are strong the tuberculosis bacteria has come all the way up to your throat, that is why your neck is swollen. You will get better in three months, I guarantee it."

When he first arrived at Konchi-in, Mumon Roshi could not even lift a broom to sweep the garden. From the first day on he received daily loquat leaf treatments, and at the end of three months was sweeping; first one meter, then another meter, then three meters, then a little further and a little further until he was able to sweep across the whole garden without getting tired and

losing his breath. Just as the priest had said, in three months he was completely cured. Knowing that if he went back to Ekai Kawaguchi Roshi's place now the same thing would happen again, he instead entered Hanazono (Buddhist) College in Kyoto. From that time on he trained at Myoshinji and Tenryuji monasteries, continuing as a monk until he was fifty. His teacher was Seisetsu Genjo Zenji.

He finished his training with Seisetsu Genjo Zenji, and when he was fifty-one he became the abbot of Reiunin on the grounds of Myoshinji, and the main *roshi* at Shofukuji monastery in Kobe. From that time on he was raising monks—two or three hundred disciples.

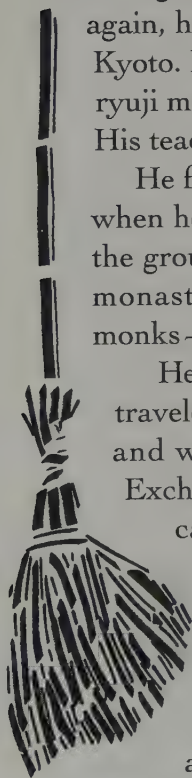
He became the abbot of Myoshinji. During that time he traveled not only throughout Japan, but abroad as well, and was the main energy of the East-West Spiritual Exchange between Catholicism and Buddhism. He took care of the spiritual pain of those countries where

Japan had left behind lasting grief through its wartime activities, going to those countries and chanting *sutras* for those who had died there. He was raising disciples in France and Italy, sending disciples off one after another. He went to America and Mexico as well, with his own physical form

showing the way of Zen, and developing it, thus taking his own training to its ultimate expression.

Mumon Roshi also published an enormous number of books. He was the president of Hanazono College and head of the Institute for Zen Studies. He made great efforts in a variety of energetic functions up to the age of eighty-eight when he naturally faded away, just as the Buddha had said, "Liberating everyone he could, and for those who were not yet liberated, leaving for them the karma to become enlightened," leaving behind his disciples who would function after him, carrying on his work.

Up to December tenth of last year, Mumon Roshi was continually full of energetic *ki*, which declined little by little. Finally,





on the twenty-fourth of December, two of his disciples, Taitsu Roshi and Shunan Roshi, were present when Mumon Roshi gave one great huge yawn and left. Mumon Roshi's face in dying was truly beautiful, truly peaceful. Hung by his pillow were the calligraphy words:

The mind of the *Dharma* is without death.

I was able to see him on the nineteenth of December, and that turned out to be the last time I was ever able to visit with him. One week before his death, Mumon Roshi sat up and asked his disciples to bring ink and paper and he wrote his final words, which would bring his life to a close. He wrote:

For the liberation of all beings  
At the end, there is nothing left to be said  
No words, no form  
Only abandoning everything  
Throughout the heavens and earth.

It was for the liberation of all beings, for that purpose, that Mumon Roshi (who had been given up on by the doctors but since then had never taken one drop of medicine), lived for fifty years completely at one with nature, giving all of his life energy to the upbringing of his disciples, and teaching the path to so many people, taking care of their delusions, their dilemmas, their problems. How many people he liberated is impossible to imagine.

Those of us who were able to live near Mumon Roshi and see his everyday life know that this is exactly how he lived. Every morning waking up at four o'clock with the monks. Every night working past eleven o'clock, answering the letters that came to him from various people, preparing for his lectures, writing the different things that had been requested. This kind of work continued every single day. During the daytime, sometimes two or three times a day, giving *Dharma* lectures and talks and then the teaching of all the monks. No matter how cold it was, he was always barefoot, no matter how painful and difficult, always moving right along with the monks.



This was all for his disciples and for the people of society. For this he gave one hundred percent, no, one hundred and twenty percent. He used his entire physical body, used it totally in complete combustion, never thinking about his own pleasure or how to enjoy himself. Of course, all of this was joyful work for him. This was the true world of Mumon Roshi. For his own desires or wishes he never used one single moment. This was Mumon Roshi's life. Absolute, complete combustion.

With this body, which had been ravaged by sickness, he did very well to live to the ripe old age of eighty-eight. There was nothing left to be said. At this point what could have been left? Everything to be said had been said, to be taught, taught; everything that was to remain as guidance had been completed, there was nothing else. No words; no form. Even though this body of Mumon Roshi is thrown away, this true life that fills heavens and earth will continue on.

In everyone's continuing this path of truth, in everyone's awakening to their Buddha nature, and realizing their true roots; this is how Mumon Roshi's great energy continues. Abandoning it all throughout heavens and earth, giving life from within to that true Buddha nature, breaking through the physical limitation of a body, traversing through heavens and earth, freely passing in every direction as if he were saying, "Here I am now, here is where I am now."

That Buddha nature traversing throughout heavens and earth is infinite, without death. The *Buddha-dharma* is only one expression of the truth of the whole universe. Everyone who becomes one with the life of the universe, living it completely, will express in their bodies the total body of the universe. The universe will never decay, nor will those in the mind of oneness with it; even if the earth and the planets decay, the truth of the universe itself will go on infinitely.

The atoms accumulate, gather, form shapes according to karmic connection, disintegrate and change into different substances, yet the consciousness of the universe never departs. The

mainstay will never depart. To live truly that mind of the universe is the mind of the Buddha. This must be the way of practice of the Buddha's way.

Everyone has their own unique individual expression, but all of our roots sink deep into the very life of the universe. This is the enlightenment of the Buddha, and everything there is, is the way of the Buddha. That mind of the Buddha, the *Dharma*, is infinite; to realize those eyes of the *Dharma* is the very essence and purpose of every person in training. This is what we must truly realize through *kensho*. For this we do *zazen*, and from this we will never be separated. Everyone, right along with Mumon Roshi: live in this way, breathe in this way, and in this firm, sturdy *zazen* posture, this firm sturdy breathing, raise this mind carefully and diligently.

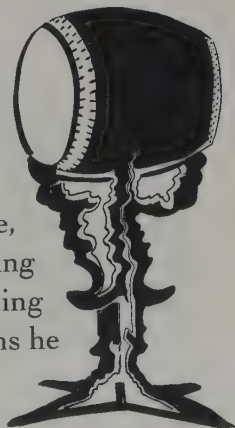
# That Luxury of Mind

January 1990

We send away the year of 1989. We welcome the year of 1990, the beginning of the last ten years of this century. Each of you, in your own various ways, are welcoming this year. Happy New Year!

Those of you who have had the experience of spending the new year at Sogenji know well what we do. On the night of the thirty-first of December, from eleven-thirty, the New Year's eve bell begins ringing. Many people come from town, lining up one after another, to ring away the one hundred and eight desires and thereby become able to realize their vows in the new year. For this they ring the bell. All the people who have rung the bell a hundred and eight times so joyfully then leave Sogenji to make their first visits to their shrines in the new year. And again, Sogenji returns to its usual calm and quietness.

In the following dawn, in the freezing cold, the person in charge of the *sutra* reading sounds the awakening bell and from then our new year begins. From four o'clock we hear the *taikos* sounding and from the *zendo*, one after another, the monks come and enter the *bondo*. At that time, the abbot stands in the middle of the *bondo* holding a stick in his hand and draws a big circle. Facing the paintings of Bodhidharma and the Patriarchs he gives a poem he has written expressing his thoughts, vows, and wishes for the new year.



Following that, everyone does prostrations to the statue of Bodhidharma and then we vow to put our energy into this new year of training to renew our efforts for our own individual practice and for helping each other as well. We sit down and have tea together. Next, we have our first *sutras* of the year.

This Zen *dojo* is clearly meant for the realization of that Buddha nature which is without birth and death. For this we have our training here.

In the deep mountain  
No almanac  
Even when the coldest season passes  
No awareness of a new year.

Even though the coldest part of the year has come to an end, there is no one saying this is now this number year or that number year. For those who train in Zen, or within the deep mountain, in the universe, in the great, huge, expansive world, there is no calendar.

The year 1989 or 1990—these are dates which humans have made up. For the universe it is irrelevant whether we call this 1989 or 1990. There is no such marking there. If spring comes, it is totally spring. If summer comes, then it is just summer. When autumn comes, autumn is here. When winter comes, it is time for winter. At each time, the world, as it is, is the truth. We see this clearly and directly. This is the world of Zen. There is no such thing as a measure of time.

We have this Zen path to realize clearly this world where there is no time, this world beyond time where a human being's original nature exists, the substance of the universe. In this path we also use our time very meticulously. We take into consideration the phases of the year, the seasons, very carefully. That life which only comes about at a particular time of year, we treat it with care. Our true mind within it, in that there is no time and no space, the universe is as it is. That is the basis of our being.

While we each come from that, we also have that reality within which we live. This world around us, this society, this land where

### *That Luxury of Mind*

we live, this body by which we are limited, we have all of these realities which we must carry around with us, living through our life with them. We cannot ignore this body, this society, this world. Ignoring these, there is no Zen.

This society, this body, this self without contradiction, while still living within that contradiction, how will we resolve it? How should we resolve it? Not covering up and hiding from that contradiction, not deceiving ourselves and looking away from that contradiction, but realizing it clearly and going beyond it is what the world of Zen is for and about.

### *Official New Year Poem*

The heads of all countries, East and West  
Talk in all directions about peace.  
Finally that nondualistic gate is fully opened  
And all people can realize their true nature  
With this new year may our own deep resolution  
Grow deeper and stronger.

In this new year there are so many struggles, and there have been so many struggles in the last year. This was a year full of change. In China, in Poland, and in other Eastern Bloc countries the people's movement became active. The people's movement freed some from their long rule by Russia. The Berlin Wall came down, finally creating a path to peace through that guarded place. However, going through these struggles so many people lost their lives.

The world has finally entered a time when it can begin to become one. This is the way things are heading and opening, but can this bring us actual true peace? Is that what the future will hold with these things happening? Will we truly be able to find the people's freedom? Can true human freedom and true liberation be found in this way? Can we realize it from all these things? Even if the wall between East and West Berlin, the one we can see with our own eyes, has come down, where will that take us? Perhaps it has been taken down and is not there any-



more, but who made that wall? Who put it there in the first place? God did not make that wall. That wall was made from the beginning by human beings. Our human frictions and limitations put up that wall.

The true wall, a more difficult wall to bring down, is the wall of the ego within each of us. There is nothing as unreal but difficult to deal with as this wall. If we put it truthfully, the Berlin Wall, the "Iron Curtain" as well, have come from that mind of all of us. That's how it has to be said. And, if we see it that way, true peace itself must also come from the breaking down of that ego wall within our mind. Only when that wall has been taken down can true human liberation be accomplished. Only then can the true master within each person be realized.

There is never a time when we can stop praying for full broadness and height of mind. In this broadness and height of mind our culture is realized most deeply, and in those eras the culture is of the highest quality. Even though we have vowed to find humans' best, the most fortunate, happiest situation from the dark time of the Middle Ages through the Renaissance until the time of our modern culture—from that time forward, only technology has developed totally. We have to ask whether or not that is the most fortunate situation for human beings.

We have extremely talented scientists making all kinds of discoveries of the physical world, but what about the true essence of the human nature within all this physical, material discovery? How is this essence being affected? Even if the wall between East and West Berlin has been taken down human beings haven't made any progress whatsoever. In our minds there is no true peace yet. We're always complaining, dissatisfied, full of things to be discontented about. And they continue to come forth, continual discontent, something which today's education can't deal with, which appears in forms such as drugs, which have even entered the elementary schools, and problems with divorce. Every time we pick up the newspaper we read about these things—a world of darkness to which anyone is susceptible. This

is a dark, uncomfortable place for all of us, deep within our minds. It stains the places that might be peaceful otherwise.

This year is the four hundredth anniversary of the death of Sen No Rikyu. He is the famous, completely realized head of the tea ceremony. Without being limited to the world of tea, he also influenced many other worlds as well.

From the age of fifteen he was doing *sanzen*, which reverberated throughout his entire life. This enabled him to teach others of humanity's true freedom. With his own life's purpose he is even today influencing thinking on what is true culture, what is the true way of humanity. His life still calls to us and his path still teaches us.

He did not take the path of the ordained monk. He lived in the very midst of society, in the very midst of political power, in the very midst of economic problems, right in the midst of society and people. With his own actual experience of the deepest reaches of Zen, he had understood what truth is, knowing both the true Zen of human quality and the true aesthetic height of culture. Throughout his life he continued realizing and living from his most pure mind, realizing his own deepest truth and reaching out to all the people in all parts of society with his teaching and being, yet, while being completely involved, not being affected by his political involvement. He kept his truth uncompromisingly. That very culture which he purified so thoroughly he deepened and worked with, as far as it could possibly be done. Even down until today those things which he taught are still supporting those minds which understand the depth of Japanese culture, which he was so influential in developing and refining.

Not only in waiting for the flower's bloom  
In the mountain home the first green sprouting shows us spring.

This is a poem Rikyu borrowed to express the true, deep mind of a person who has thoroughly realized the path of tea ceremony. Those flowers of the springtime covering the landscape in every direction — whoever sees that grows joyful from the sight and

feels the good fortune it brings to us. That life energy can be felt easily, that great energy of pure nature at work. But the true edge of life, the true brilliance of life is not found in that spring's gloriously overflowing fullness of the beauty of the flowers. It's revealed in that concealed mountain, deep under the snow. Underneath that snow a tiny piece of life shows forth its face, a bright green leaf. In this place, true life—the truth of life—can be discovered. With this poem the understanding of the deepest truth has been expressed:

When the landscape lies  
Without any flower of spring  
Any autumn tint  
On the shore a straw-thatched hut  
Lined against the sunset gold.

This place is where there is no flower, no leaf, not a speck of color. This is an evening hour in the area of Banshu by the ocean, where there is no shadow of a single person, no visible color, not a bit of life to be spotted. In that place we can see the rough ocean, feel the chilly wind and find there just one solitary fisherman's hut. This place is a quiet, deep state of mind without any discursive thinking, without any busy human intellectualizing. Everything has been cleaned away completely; not a single tree's green leaf, not a single colorful autumn leaf, not a single bright autumn color, not even one leaf remaining on the branch, that bare nakedness which reaches to the base of the roots, everything has been put aside and there is only this chill from heaven.

In that way we discover the very life bringing forth that tree; prior to any kind of discursive thinking or intellectualization, before the faces of our mother and father, before the conditioning is stuck on, that actual source point of all life. We have to wash our roots until we dive into and find this place, into that great death, the actual experiencing of the root. Taking that experience and living our life in its truthfulness—living in society in truthfulness—must be how the world of Zen is understood.

*That Luxury of Mind*

The discovery of the Buddha was the discovering of the quality of human existence which is not limited to one person, to one area, or to one time. It isn't limited by a country's boundaries or by a certain person's way of thinking or by a certain human idea or culture. It is beyond all those limits, beyond ages, beyond all limits, all attachment to form, reaching out from the deepest root to spread through all humans, regardless of time or place. A fiber joining every single one of them is what the Buddha was talking about.

Every single person's roots return to the same place, all life energy—all energy—comes surging forth from this place. To be able to realize and invent many new things may seem to be what a new culture is all about, but in fact that can't truly be said. To be able to understand the world and one's life clearly and directly is the true discovery, and from that world comes a new inventiveness.

Just to make things, just to discover new things—if that were what culture was, then around us we would have more and more stuff, more and more things which have been produced. In accordance with our human desire and greediness, things are being discovered and produced all the time. That is not true culture. For the people who are coming after us, will we just be remembered as a generation which brought forth so much garbage and so many unnecessary things? We must think about this carefully.

Man's life is seventy years  
Surrounded by danger he rarely expresses  
Welcome to me this precious blade,  
Slaying all the Buddhas together.

Now my girded sword,  
That upon my armed side  
Hitherto I've worn,  
Draw I forth, and brandishing  
Fling it in the face of heaven.

These poems were written by Rikyu at the end of his life. Finishing up his seventy-year life, he gave these poems. When look-



ing back on his seventy years of life, it appears to have had meaning, but then again no meaning at all. If people were to criticize him then he would be easily criticizable. But, he lived within his truth and there was nothing but that in his life. Those seventy years of that truth, what was it that decided that truth?

Now my girded sword,  
That upon my armed side

Within his deepest mind, beyond good and bad, beyond gain and loss, beyond realizing and losing, beyond all human intellectualization and discursiveness, beyond knowledge, he developed something beyond all of that, from that place where none of these reach, that deepest part of humans' true mind. If we open our eyes from that place, the furthest and deepest reaches of this mind, there is no Buddha to be thankful for, not even a Patriarch to be recognized. If the eye is opened from that source point of our true nature, throughout our lives, we live through what is seen by that true eye. In that way, Rikyu lived the seventy years of his life, with this one single truth.

Hitherto I've worn,  
Draw I forth, and brandishing  
Fling it in the face of heaven.

Our everyday life is not something which is so pretty or beautiful; even to try to live in a way which is correct, truthful, and beautiful, is something very, very difficult to do. It doesn't usually go as we wish or hope it would. While we are living this daily life we naturally find that we have a lot of clutter building up, a lot of stain accumulating. We naturally give birth to things which make us swerve away from our path of truth. We naturally want to be comfortable—that mind which wants ease comes forth; we naturally want someone to love us and we want people to love only us. When we realize that we are carrying around a lot of heavy packages, unable to go left or right, east or west because of these heavy burdens, we see that our mind is loaded down, confused. If we leave it like that, our burdens will just increase and grow heavier.



## *That Luxury of Mind*

In order to make that source point of all humans bright and clear, we have to cut through those extraneous thoughts, that delusive thinking, those extra attachments. Those thoughts have to be cut away, cut away, cut away, thrown away, thrown away, thrown away. In doing that we can cut away those extra attachments, and in trying we realize the need for the sword which can do this. That sword is not that kind of material sword which cuts a person physically, but is an inner sword which cuts away all of our dualism. This sword is what the world of *zazen* is about. This is what *sussokan* is for as well. This is also the world of koans.

Until we realize that source point of our lives as human beings we have to continue cutting away, throwing away all of those extraneous thoughts, all the delusion and attachment, all those unnecessary things, all those unnecessary inventions and developments, within us and around us as well. We have to shave away all that unnecessary stuff and get rid of it all. In doing that, everyone will find that within their own mind those roots have been washed clean and their deep mind discovered clearly, just as Rikyu expressed.

When the landscape lies  
Without any flower of spring  
Any autumn tint  
On the shore a straw-thatched hut  
Lined against the sunset gold.

This is the place without any motion, the place of serenity. It is that deepest place in our mind. Our eyes can see clearly and innocently from that place. From that place our ears are wide open, hearing each thing as it comes, directly. Within our mind there is nothing to be stuck on and caught by. We are able to see other people clearly and totally, just as they are. This is what this state of mind leads us to.

That path of tea which Rikyu developed and completed is not one where there are great and luxurious gardens, but a small garden with only the necessary things, a few plants without any-

thing unnecessary whatsoever. It is a garden which has been well-swept, well-weeded, purified, cleaned, and cleared, like our minds where anything unnecessary has been taken away. In front of our eyes is only that which is necessary, only that which needs to be done, and all of it taken care of very carefully. This is the tea garden, just as it is.

Rikyu left us the words telling us that we do not need a luxurious house. If the rain can't come in and if the cold can't come in, that is enough—nothing luxurious, no three-story building. If our bodies are sustained by the food we eat, then that is sufficient as well. After that we can give all the energy we have to society, thus returning it all to society. There is no need to hold onto or cling to anything besides that. We only need to harmonize those basic needs in our lives and give everything else to society. There is no need to reach for material luxuries, but instead to realize that luxury of mind, to hold that important. Here is the true, deep mind of Zen.

Rikyu returned tea from its very formal manner to the finally quiet, humble place where there is nothing extraneous at all; where you do not depend upon things for the enjoyment of tea, but upon the luxury of mind in its broadest, greatest height. This was the world which he was able to realize and teach completely.

We are today drowning in luxurious, unnecessary things. This is a problem of today's human life. Instead of trying for material luxuries, we must, from within ourselves, realize our true mind, realize our roots and, making our mind's way true in this way, live in the right way from this clear mind. From there, our daily life will unfold naturally: taking everything we have and giving it to society, our body and soul, our whole energy. More than at any other time this is what today's generation needs. This is how it must be expressed. Making this vow, the resolution for our new year is to bring all of this to society as well.

# Only This Instant

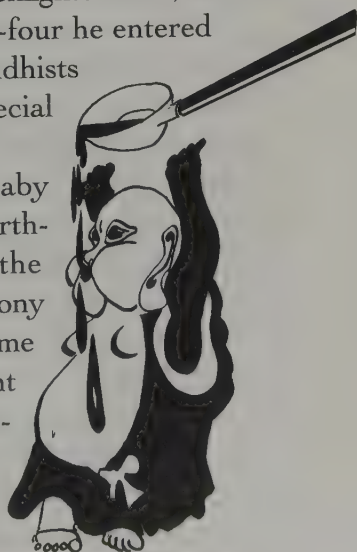
April 1990

People of this Buddhist country of Japan, on this day (the eighth of April), the Buddha's birthday, put a small Buddha statue in the middle of the *bondo* or *Dharma* hall and with *amacha*, a sweet tea brewed from a tree's leaves, celebrate by pouring the sweet tea with a small ladle over the baby Buddha statue's head. This ceremony is like the Christian baptism ceremony.

The important days in the Buddha's life are the eighth of April on which his birthday is celebrated, the day on which he was born; the eighth of December, when after six years of severe ascetic training he was able to realize deep enlightenment; and the fifteenth of February, when at age eighty-four he entered nirvana at Kusinara in the *sala* grove. Buddhists also honor this day of his passing with special ceremonies.

This pouring of the *amacha* over the baby Buddha statue's head is a ceremony of northern Buddhist countries. The people of the southern Buddhist countries have a ceremony called *uesakasai* which celebrates, at the same time, the Buddha's birthday, enlightenment day and nirvana day. They are all celebrated on the full moon of May.

If we look at the calendar for this year we can see that the full moon of May is



on the ninth of the month. In India and in other southern Buddhist countries great celebrations will be held honoring the Buddha at that time.

When the Buddha was born, it is said he immediately walked forward seven and a half steps and put his right hand up into the air and pointed his left hand to the earth, and said:

In all the heavens and earth there is only one.

There is only one of me in all the heavens and earth, he said.

But why does a religion which accords with scientific understanding so well pass along such a miraculous sounding story? A newborn baby being able to walk seven and a half steps and then crying out such words as, "In all the heavens and earth there is only one," no such unheard of thing could be possible. Then why is it taught this way, passed along as the truth? It's truly mysterious, but those who kept the records of the Buddha's teaching, who had deeply understood what he was saying were the ones who wrote this down.

When we were born from our mothers' bellies, every single one of us, without exception, gave a great cry, "Waaaaaaaaaaaa! Waaaaaaaaaaaa!" sounding and echoing throughout the heavens and earth, with a huge voice. With this cry a baby's birth is confirmed. It must be said that this cry, this voice, is expressing, "In all the heavens and earth there is only one," without any explanation or word needed. No matter what difficult circumstance or era it may be entering, without fear, without the slightest bit of insecurity about what will happen from now on, without any embarrassment whatsoever about not having anything at all, a baby enters with just a huge cry expressing that life energy which it's been given, filling and reverberating throughout the heavens and earth.

It must be said that this sound of birth of our life energy, which fills up the heavens and the earth, is a splendid expression of that energy which surges through the whole universe.

I think that to realize and accept this powerful life energy

with which we are all endowed equally at birth is the true teaching of the Buddha.

To say that Buddha walked seven and a half steps at birth is an expression of the freedom of humans and that no matter what circumstances we find ourselves facing, that from within ourselves, with our own energy and power, we are able to stand up and keep going. To understand this as an expression of our own self-reliant nature is what the Buddha was teaching.

Pointing his right hand to the heavens and his left hand to the earth was a proclamation that there is nothing in the heavens above humans, no absolute being who can make a slave of humans. The left hand pointing to the earth, proclaims that there is nothing on this earth which can mar a human being's individual dignity, our individual character, our true human character. There is no God who can pass judgment on us and no devil who can corrupt us.

Our human nature is truly a dignified existence in all of the heavens and earth, and to understand our life in this way is the teaching of the Buddha. This doesn't mean that the Buddha was conceitedly saying how wonderful a human being he is. All of humankind, every single person is born with this exact same precious life energy, that is what he was saying and confirming. This is what the Buddha was teaching and how it should be taken.

On the eighth of December, when the Buddha looked up at the morning star and was enlightened, when he himself was awakened to and realized this true, original nature he said:

How wondrous, how wondrous, all beings in existence, every single one, without exception, is endowed with this exact same wisdom of the *Tathagatha*. How mysterious, how mysterious! It took me six years and now I've finally understood this, but I didn't attain this just now nor did it come because of my ascetic practice: everyone has this clear nature from the moment they're born. Isn't it most mysterious?

All people, every person, all humankind, whether it is a person who can't see, or a person who can't hear, or a person with



only one leg, every single person has been born with the same pure and true nature.

He cried out in amazement at his realization. He was not exclaiming out loud at his own greatness at that moment, he was amazed at how all humans are equally endowed with this true nature. He was astonished at the realization that we've all been born with the exact same pure nature.

Everyone grieved as he was about to pass into *parinirvana*. They gathered at his pillow's side and everyone was in tears. The Buddha said to them:

Stop crying! Don't cry about this. Everyone you meet you will at some time have to leave; all things that are born, die, without exception. Haven't I been teaching you this every day? Isn't this the way of things, as they naturally are? Stop crying!

In this way he left them, teaching them and guiding them. He said:

Having been born into this body I must die, and having met you all, I must leave you; but this mind, this heart, this human character, that true nature which I have realized, that pure nature to which I awakened, that Buddha nature you must, each of you, one after another realize. If you then pass this teaching along to all other beings I will live in this world of the awakened mind eternally. Teach this *Dharma*, that the awareness of the realization of people's pure original nature should not perish.

In this way he taught them. His disciples then asked further: "But when you are no longer here with us, we will of course have your teachings, and we do believe them to be without mistake. But when some problem arises, to whom shall we go to ask for answers? On whom can we rely?"

Having been asked this, the Buddha answered:

Go only within yourself for the light on the way, go only to yourself for refuge. Don't look for refuge in others.

This he taught them clearly:

Within yourselves, find there your light and your refuge.  
Not in your egoistic selves of course, but in that *Dharma*,  
that pure mind before the ego appears. Find refuge in that  
mind.

This is how he taught them. That pure nature which the Buddha discovered was not the ego. The ego must be respected, but it is still something incomplete. Each person's individual characteristics are also important, but they are different for each person. That which is incomplete or that which is different for each person cannot be considered to be the truth. Not ego, and not individual characteristics, but prior to the ego, that very base from which those individual characteristics arise, that place at which all humans arrive, without fail, if they dig within and search inwardly, that place which each person will inevitably realize. Realizing that true basis, encountering that actual source of our humanity—if we are not doing this with our *zazen* it can't be said to be the true practice of Zen.

The Asian philosopher, Dr. Nishida Kitaro, also called Sunshin Koji, did *zazen* every day and wrote a poem about the deep mind he was able to realize.

Our true mind has a deep place  
beyond where the waves of grief and joy may reach.

Deep beyond the ego, deep beyond our individual characteristics, is this deep place where even human joy and grief can't reach, is an eternal location, an eternal root of the mind. Grief, happiness, misery, confusion, delusion, and all other expressions of the mind are born from this clear pure nature of human joy, all of them come forth from here. This source, in psychology called the subconscious mind, is beyond all conscious mind. This place at the very bottom, to realize this base, this is what the Buddha meant when he spoke of taking refuge in the *Dharma*.

In Buddhism it's often said that humans' original mind, that mind we have at birth is like a clear mirror, pure and unclut-

tered, with nothing in it whatsoever, without shape, form or color. If something comes before it, the mirror only reflects it, but the mirror itself gives birth to nothing. If what has been reflected leaves, its image disappears, but the mirror itself loses nothing. Within the mirror there is no birth, no death. No matter how dirty a thing which is reflected is, the mirror doesn't get dirty, nor does it become beautiful because something beautiful is reflected in it. The mirror doesn't get dirty, clean, or beautiful. Just because something is reflected doesn't mean anything increases in it either, nor does anything in it ever decrease. A mirror is without increase or decrease.

Without birth, without death, not dirty, not clean, no increase, no decrease. This is the same as we read in the *Heart Sutra*:

All *Dharmas* are marked with emptiness  
 They do not appear, nor disappear  
 Are not tainted, nor pure  
 Do not increase, nor decrease.

Bankei Zenji, an exemplary Zen master of about three hundred years ago, said that even such a lengthy explanation was unnecessary. Just the expression "unborn," that is sufficient. If nothing extra is created in the mind, that's enough. With just that, everything will be solved. Humans' pure, original nature is just this. Without shape, form, or color; without birth and death; not clean or dirty; no increasing, no decreasing; not male or female; not young, not old; not intelligent, not stupid; not rich, not poor. There are no words, no explanations possible, no description that will apply here, only a pure, mirror-like base. This is humans' true quality, this is an actual experience. With our *zazen*, we cut all *nen* (mind-instant), dig down completely to the source of those *nen*—dig, dig, dig until we reach the place where the human character has been totally cleared. When the source point is reached, this state of mind can be touched.

This clear human character, which is like a mirror, can accept and receive everything, but nothing which is reflected can get

### *Only This Instant*

stuck to this mirror. It reflects everything exactly as it is, but the mirror itself stays untouched. This mirror-like mind has no sense of "that's me" or "that's him, not me." It has no dualism, makes no distinctions like that. At that true base there actually is no differentiation between self and others. The world which is reflected by that mirror—reflected in that mirror—is not one of self and other, it has no such separation. It accepts everything as one unified whole. It was originally one world with no division into "my" world and "his" world. There are no two worlds like this; from the origin there is only one unified world.

To understand this as an actual fact with your own experience, is the wisdom of the Buddha. From there arises the functioning, the activity of the human mind which naturally feels another's pain as one's own pain, feels another's joy as one's own joy. A warm encompassing mind naturally arises, comes from this wisdom and experience. That is what is called the compassion of the Buddha.

If we can realize the source point of our human character, all of the world naturally becomes one; not divided, but one unified whole. A great, expansive and huge world of one. Wisdom works here and humans' joy, suffering, and sadness become our own joy, suffering, and sadness. It is not somebody else's joy, it's my very own joy as well. A warm encompassing mind will naturally be revealed there. This is what the Buddha meant when he said:

Seek the light within yourself.

When we encounter this true mind, touch our original nature, we also realize that infinite creative possibility in the deepest reaches of our mind. We feel an urge to create something, a positive functioning energy is born. In our activity, when making things, we feel the joy of just being alive. Then, when we finish what we are making and see our work completed, we feel another sense of joy. Then, when someone appreciates what we've made, still another sense of joy. Life's purpose is discovered in doing



this. Becoming this kind of lively, energetic human being is the rebirth into that which the Buddha meant when he said:

Look for the light within yourself. Find refuge within yourself. Look for the light in the *Dharma*, find refuge in the *Dharma*.

This is a very important teaching of the Buddha.

Today so many people are dying of cancer, of AIDS. These people are facing death, dealing with dying. This must be seen as one of the major concerns of society. For this reason, there are now many books about people's actual cancer experiences, of people's experiences of their last days before death, dying of AIDS or cancer, written in detail.

Reading what the authors of these books have to say, we find many similarities in what they write. In one book it tells of how people who are approaching death find their daily life becoming simpler. When they become very aware of the fact that life is limited, social success, material affluence, and noisy parties are clearly realized as meaningless. For what are you living? What should be done with the remaining time you have left? These questions become important to consider.

For those who know that the remainder of their lives is limited to a certain number of days, no matter how unpleasant the weather, they are thankful for it, because they are alive and present in it.

For those whose lives continue beyond the expected time, the very fact of being alive, just that, is wonderful, no matter what inconvenience or deep discomfort they might have to endure.

Another author writes that when people know that they only have a certain number of days, weeks, or months to live, they truly live every day completely and fully, doing that which has the greatest importance for them. Making this kind of resolution for their last days makes every single day very precious, infinitely satisfying, and productive. No matter how seriously ill people



are, they can still listen to the music that they love—there are some people who spend their time just doing that. Some people choose to spend it talking quietly with their family and close friends. Some people may find comfort for their minds in spending time alone reflecting over what they've done in their lifetimes. Others may, until the very, very last moment, enjoy being surrounded by lots of friends making conversation and fuss. The way of life of each person up until these last moments is expressed and honored at this turning point.

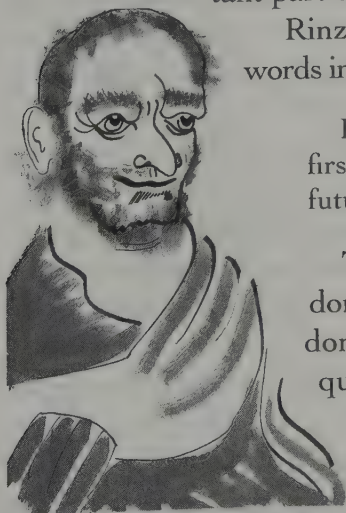
Even if all hope is given up for some, to the amazement of people in the medical field, some patients continue living for a long time. Even if it's not for such a lengthy period of time, most of the people live their days fully. In these people who see death right in front of their faces, this present moment is the truth.

In this very moment, the wish to put everything we have into it that we can is the same for every person nearing death. This is the world of *zazen*. In *zazen*, making use of our healthy bodies, we must experience that ultimate place, that razor's edge. We do this, while our bodies are still healthy and can work, awakening to a true human way of living, then putting this awakening to work, going into society. This is the way of Zen, a very important part of the teaching of the Buddha.

Rinzai Zenji taught us in this way. These words in the *Records of Rinzai* are very important:

Don't add on extra thoughts to the first *nen*, don't produce thoughts of the future.

Those thoughts which naturally arise—don't associate other thoughts with them, don't add onto them. Don't continue inquiring into each thought. Don't twist around and work over every thought that comes along, with ideas of this and that. This is not to say, "Don't



see, don't hear, don't speak." See with your eyes, use them fully, but cut the thoughts on the spot as soon as you're finished. Even if it's something good, don't add onto it; no matter how bad it is, don't continue thinking about it. Cut it on the spot. Use your inventive powers to do this. Don't be concerned and anxious over what hasn't even occurred yet. Our life is not happening in the already finished past, nor is it happening in the future which hasn't even arrived yet. Only in this very present moment is our life happening, in this moment. With this moment using everything we are, putting our whole selves into it: this is the living function of *zazen*.

People in this world of the final stages of their lives have not necessarily had the experience of *zazen*, but they enter the same state of mind as those who practice *zazen*. What this means is humans' most important state of mind. When humans take off all of their decorations, really face in the direction of, and dig down to what's truly necessary, what finally remains is the purest place of the original nature. There is, in fact, only this instant.

The person who over two thousand years ago taught us about this life, this human character, this actual experience, this functioning, was the Buddha Shakyamuni. Today, especially, we should remember that we have received this human body, so difficult to receive, and we have encountered the teaching of the Buddha, so rare to encounter. If at this very time, we don't clarify this truth, then when, when are we planning to do it?

When we think of the birth of the Buddha, we think how important it is that even one person more can know of this teaching of humans' true source, of this true path to realizing that mind which he taught. Then we vow to work to realize our own true nature, and vow never to stop until we do.

# True Meaning

July 1990

Until very recently the transplanting of organs was considered by some a blasphemy against God; there was a strict taboo against it. Today, with the combined motivations of preserving human life and the achievement of fame through scientific progress, it has become commonplace and controversial.

Of course, many people have been saved by this progress: people are able to replace some defective or damaged body parts with transplanted or artificial ones and people who have lost a large amount of blood are given a transfusion when it's needed. In this world one after another our illnesses are cured, our health problems are solved, and many people are being helped.

Today, however, with livers, kidneys and even hearts able to be traded around, it could be said that at some point, if we imagine this process being extended, a body could become unrecognizable.

The time has come when life itself can be produced and developed in a test tube. Medicine has made great strides in fulfilling everyone's hopes and expectations. The expressed mission of medicine is to increase a human's life by even a second, if possible; to prolong human life in whatever way we can. As we develop in what we think is the best possible way, we have to stop and wonder if we are really moving in the best direction, considering those who will follow us, and reflecting on the total context of the past, present, and future. We have to question the real necessity of

what's being done and ask whether it's really so important. This is something which has to be considered very thoroughly.

In the specialized world of medical treatment, doctors will do something because it's an excellent technique. If the doctor's judgment matches with the desire of the patient, then it is considered the correct procedure to follow. This way of thinking comes to be accepted unquestioningly. But we must be very careful, for actually this is a position of great insecurity for both doctor and patient because the scope and criteria of judgment becomes very narrow. Like someone who is drowning and grasping for a wisp of straw being extended, when the medical community gives the fast-sinking patient even a slight whiff of hope, it is jumped at.

On one hand the medical field can, from its technical acuity, grasp a problem sharply, then, throwing out the extraneous noise, provide a direct and efficient treatment. For the people around the patient who are deeply concerned, this can narrow their vision and the vision of the general public as well. This narrowing comes about naturally.

With this in mind, if we look at things from the point of view of the medical side, we are reminded of the pledge of Hippocrates, that doctors will truly work giving everything only for the sake of the patient. Therefore, the development of the ethics of medical treatment is critical. This development of ethics has to be questioned as to whether it's truly for the patient's sake or not, and as to whether true human dignity is being considered or not. This really has to be checked carefully.

Today's medical field must not just be an extension of a scholarly study. If it comes from a place of understanding of humans' true source point it will be without error. If the medical community can recognize the development of our true character as human beings as the goal of life, then it will still have something to offer even to those patients with no hope of being cured. To vow to complete the development of the true human character—efforts to achieve this must not be spared, even to the very last moment. Patients, too, from within themselves, will not lose sight



of what's truly important in life and will, until the very last moment, continue to strive fully to polish and develop themselves, not sparing any effort.

Even if one is not the Buddha, the problems of life, death, suffering and sickness are for all of us urgent matters. There probably never has been an era in which such a big cry has been raised over the dignity of human life. Yet we have to ask sincerely whether there has ever been such an era when there is so little true respect for human life. For what exactly is this life which is being respected? For example, even if we were to extend the average human life span to one hundred years, without the deep understanding of the true meaning the life of those hundred years contained, simply extending the duration would be meaningless.

In Japan when a person was sentenced to death, the execution would take place twenty days after the Minister of Justice put his stamp on the execution papers. Not only in those final twenty days, but also from the time when the prisoner's penalty was being considered—from the time the prisoner entered the prison—there was a constant educational program conducted to enable him to awaken to his true character, his original nature, with the goal of completing his character's development. Among those who were executed there were several who had realized deeply their true and brilliant nature.

We have the words left by one such man who was executed, Shima Akishito. This man was raised as a child in China, and returned to Japan after the war. Because of so many changes in his life full of hardship—his mother dying of tuberculosis, suffering from tuberculosis himself, living in a cast, and under medical treatment for a long time—he was unable to attend regular school and never received the usual education of others around him. From the serious deprivation of education, he grew up as a very selfish person only interested in what he wanted. He was treated coldly by everyone around him. His personality became rough and wild. He lived a life centered around the dictates of his ego, doing whatever he felt like.



He was put into reform school and lived a life wandering around, without meaning, only following his selfish whims. Finally, in following his own selfish desires, in the year thirty-four of the Showa period at the age of twenty-five he broke into the kitchen of a farmer's house, on a rainy night, and took the small sum of two thousand yen.

While fighting with the people in the house he killed the mother of the house, the mother of two small children.

From the time he was sentenced to execution, taken to prison, and finally executed at the age of thirty-three, on the second of November in the year forty-two of the Showa period, he was given as thorough an education as possible by the people all around him, from teachers and from the church. Through this training, and from within that self-centered, narrow-minded, egoistic attachment, he was little by little able to open his heart, and, working in the path of writing *tanka* (a traditional Japanese poetry form), he expressed that newly opened mind. He expressed it in this way:

The condemned criminal wanting  
deeply to do something at last  
for society—but who will want his eyes?

That person who had never thought of anyone but himself, Shima Akishito, when he realized that he only had a very short time remaining in his life felt that he wanted to do something for the people of society. Until that time he'd only thought of himself. Since he was about to face that same death as every person in this world also faces, he wanted to do something for other people, even if it was the smallest possible thing. He donated his eyes to an eye bank. He thought, "Then maybe something I've done will be of use to society." Still, he was a person who had committed a crime. Who would want his eyes? Thinking about this, he wrote:

The sentence with the final penalty decided  
longing for longer life  
like the ant chased by a finger.

### *True Meaning*

When we know our life can't be saved we don't want to miss even one of this day's tiniest pleasures. We want to feel them and experience them most precious.

As Shima Akishito said:

If we think that our life is beyond saving,  
the tiniest joy of every single day becomes precious.

When the date of execution has been set, indeed becoming like an ant being chased by a finger, one wants to continue to live, to continue being alive. To feel "aliveness" is what Shima Akishito expressed.

In the mind of Shima Akishito, this person who had until then only thought of himself, a new single-minded sympathy and consideration for others, and joy at the life energy surging through him—living through him—was discovered. This world of which he had never before been able to taste the flavor—he now opened his mind totally to it, awakening to his own taut, fulfilled human nature. Even so, the terrible crime he had committed could not be forgiven. And, he wrote:

If I'd had a mother  
never would I have committed such a life-taking crime  
if only I could apologize to her now.

If his own mother had been alive, if he had been able to know her, then he wouldn't have committed such a brutal crime to society. He himself had slain a mother just as important and precious.

He expressed his feelings saying, "That person, that person who I am who could murder the mother of two children—all that I can do now for anyone is to be hated. Only this, this slight thing is all I can do to apologize to society." And he further expressed this feeling in the following poem:

The only way,  
to let myself be hated by society  
unable to apologize to that mother  
how heavy my guilt feels.

Right then, at that very moment, he wished that the woman, that mother whom he himself had murdered, could be right there, alive, so that he could apologize to her. He said, "I'm so sorry, what I did was terrible. What a heavy crime I am guilty of." He deeply wanted to apologize. But it was beyond any possibility of review or undoing.

In this way he repented his crime from the depths of his heart. From his painfully guilty realization within and the self-examination which it brought—from here a clear and transparent state of mind became deeper and deeper.

Finally, this man's end came. In the year forty-two of the Showa period, on the second day of November at the age of thirty-three, he was executed.

On the evening before his execution, the night of November first, he wrote his final poem:

Having come this far  
never knowing about possessing  
this clear mind  
pressed by tomorrow morning's execution  
only the last night is left.

On the evening just before his execution, from the depths of his innermost mind he was awakened to his deep, clear, and free mind. This pure state of being, a truly clear and lucid state of mind possible for all humans—it was the first time he had ever realized it.

Usually in November the nights are very chilly, but he thought, "How warm it is!" This was his last night. The very next day he was to be executed, but how settled he found his own mind to be. "This quiet settled mind! I never even knew I had such a state of mind within me!" he expressed. He had truly been able to awaken to this deep state of mind. Then he wrote letters of apology to the husband and children of the woman he'd murdered. He left words describing his passage through the end of this cold, blunt life and also wrote thank-you letters to those people who had taken care of him.

## True Meaning

In this way, on the morning of November second he left, fading away with the morning dew of the execution site.

We have to ask sincerely if it's really necessary to execute a person with such a developed character. As had been hoped, he grew into a person with a character of very high quality and then left this world. This condemned criminal's training was highly influenced by that basic Buddhist idea of what a human being truly is. In the *Lotus Sutra* it is written:

The most important reason for the Buddhas' appearing in this world is to open the eye of the wisdom of the Buddha nature in all beings, to show all beings that they have this deep wisdom of their Buddha nature, to enlighten them to the deep wisdom of their Buddha nature.

Many Buddhas came forth in this world in order to open the eyes of everyone in society to the fact that from the beginning they are already endowed with a perfect true nature, and to show them what this original, true nature is like; then to allow them to awaken to this pure nature within themselves and with that awakened understanding to express it throughout their lives.

The *Lotus Sutra* instructs us that the Buddhas have come forth into this world to do just this. We have all been born into this world for the purpose of realizing our complete and perfect true character and to realize this original character directly, to awaken to it and fulfill it. This is the Buddhist perception of what our life is. This completed pure character, what is it? This is the very world which Shima Akishito finally was able to understand and realize. He expressed it this way:

Having come this far  
never knowing about possessing  
this clear mind  
pressed by tomorrow morning's execution  
only the last night is left.

That mind which is completely clear is not something we understand from intellectual studies. Shima Akishito had never

even received the slightest basic intellectual education. Although he may have been poorly educated personally, we have to say that he was someone with a superior understanding. He had a thorough awakening to his true nature.

Shima Akishito, was able to realize this state of mind. For all of us, no matter how much we study intellectually, no matter how thoroughly we may think about things, there is a place we can't reach intellectually. This is because there is a truth beyond what scholastic studies can understand—that which Buddhism teaches, the perception of the human being and the realization of every humans' source point. The question of what is humanity's deepest source, can't be solved intellectually or scholastically.

All the generations of Patriarchs understood this same fact well. All of them were among the brilliant minds of their particular age. However, in spite of that fact, there was something they couldn't grasp clearly, some place they couldn't quite reach, some conclusion they couldn't find. With only intellectual studies there is a basic place of the mind which can't be realized. Then how can it be done? To empty one's head completely—that and only that will work. That mind before information and knowledge, that state of mind of the moment we were born. To realize that state of mind directly is the only thing we can do.

This is humans' pure natural wisdom with which we are born. To awaken to this is what *zazen* is. *Zazen* is nothing more than one process to enter this deepest place. Shima Akishito never did any *zazen*, but when human beings are facing their death, right in front of them, they enter the same state of mind that one enters in *zazen*, encountering directly and sharply their own true nature.

When our mind becomes truly clear and serene we can naturally understand that place in the mind of another person, we can understand that there is that same quiet root. Serenity is not something which is limited to oneself, but every single person's mind has that same quiet place. We realize that we all have the exact same clarity and purity of mind. To realize that root, to



*True Meaning*

touch it once, to contact that true source; that which functions from that direct encounter is truthful, in whatever way it is expressed.



一滴水  
常源





# Precious Friend

January 1991

The Buddha, on December eighth, at the age of thirty-six, after six years of ascetic training, was liberated in mind for the first time. He encountered a human being's deepest mind, exclaiming at that moment:

How wondrous! How wondrous! All living things are from the origin endowed with this same clear luminous mind which I have just realized! What an incredible discovery! This world, this shining luminous world, I had never realized until just now! This fresh new world, I'd never seen it like this before! A world glowing like this, the birds are shining, the rocks are shining, the mountains are shining, all things everywhere are shining!

In this way the Buddha expressed his deep experience at that time. Enlarging on the experience he continued, saying:

It's not that there is something special about me as a human being. All human beings are endowed from the origin with this very same wisdom. At this moment from this experience I know for a fact that all beings, without exception, are endowed with this wisdom. All living beings, all of mankind, every single one has this same deep wisdom. The Buddha wisdom, the Buddha virtue is present in everyone. It's not that there's anything special about me.

This is how the Buddha expressed his own experience, that which is called the "wisdom of the Buddha." It was also called

## MORNING DEWDROPS OF THE MIND

*nyorai*—*nyo* meaning, “as it is” and *rai* meaning, “arriving.” This does not mean an arrival full of extraneous thinking, but means the arrival of that mind before any addition of extraneous thoughts, that most pure mind, that clear mind even before the stamping with heredity, pure even prior to this.

From here, from this mind, it arrives. As expressed by the Buddha:

All human beings are endowed from the origin with this very same wisdom. . . . It's not that there is anything special about me.

One must wonder how many people there are who can see like this, can see the world and society in this fresh, brilliantly shining way.

If we examine the situation in the world today, this shining brilliant world is hard to find. The Buddha said:

Because we have delusions and attachments we don't realize this virtue and this clear mind.

While this fresh shining mind is something that we all are graced with from birth, we unfortunately don't realize it because of extraneous thoughts and dualistic-thinking habits. We should all grieve at this fact.

From the time that we are born we are already stained with heredity. From then on we gather all kinds of information and further stick on so many thoughts and ideas about things. We all carry around far too many problems. We then mistakenly see our mind in this cluttered way, taking this state to be what “truth” is, or as our “self,” or as “everything there is.” Believing that this is our own world, we mistakenly hide and cover up that pure mind. As the Buddha expressed:

Because of doing this, we conceal our most pure mind, which I didn't even know until now. Finally, finally, I was able to encounter this clear pure human character. Every single person in the world, without exception, is endowed with this very same original nature, and the reason they fail



to realize it is because that's how much extraneous thinking they've turned and how deeply and strongly stuck they are in their firmly rooted attachments.

That which is called ego is something which only appears to exist, when, in fact, it has no substantial real existence. From that gathering of experience, information, and dualism which we've been doing since birth, we create an illusion of an ego existence. We believe it to exist when it actually has no real substance. Because we aren't aware of this we rigidly defend our thoughts, the world which we live in, and our own particular way of doing things, believing that only these are of any importance. In this way we delude ourselves continually. This is the most basic cause of the hardening of our minds.

Even within our families we push for that existence and importance of self. We want things to be better for our own family than



for the neighbors. More than any other country, we want to think highly of our own country. More than any other race, we want to think highly of our own race and feel we have to defend it. More than any other religion, we feel that ours knows best. Religion is for the very purpose of liberating this deluded ego mind. For a religion to teach that only its own God may be recognized and the God of any other religion should not be, to teach that we can believe what our God teaches but we shouldn't believe what another religion teaches, confines religion to narrow sectarianism.

In order to liberate people who are attached to something which is not actual truth, an absolute being called a God is established. According to a belief in this God we attempt to clarify our false, mistaken beliefs. This very religion, however, becomes a collective ego and claims that anyone who doesn't believe in the same God is its enemy, and that anyone who disagrees with this God is from the devil. It's said that God is love, but to love only those who believe in one's same God, and then say that those who don't believe won't receive God's love, is a very limited kind of love. When religion becomes like this it too gives birth to hard rigidity. The Buddha said:

All the three worlds are my home, all the beings in this house are my children.

Those astronauts who go into space all come back saying the same thing. They talk about that blue, shining earth, in that deep black emptiness, among countless, boundlessly spread-out stars. There is only one earth in existence as far as we know right now. This one planet earth, why can't we, all members of the same species, all given life by this single planet earth, recognize each other? Why do we have to treat each other with such narrow crooked minds? Why can't the Buddhist world, Christian world, Islamic world and the various races get along without separating themselves into narrow limiting groups?

If we look at it from the point of view of the Buddha's deep enlightened mind it is as if he was looking at the earth from out

in the great universe. Seeing all the things which exist there, not just humans but all things, all the various animals and living things, everything on this earth down to the smallest creature including even rocks and water and air, it must all be seen and accepted as the life of the Buddha. That is actually just how it is.

When our mind becomes truly quiet like the stillness of the universe, where not one sound is heard, we see differently. From that perspective of looking at the earth as if from out in the universe, we see more expansively and inclusively. We see from our greater patience and deeper wisdom. From this point of view we can make decisions of much greater breadth.

All the problems in this world, all of them are my responsibility. The war in Iraq, with those countries which attacked through the United Nations—this is not someone else's problem, but is my very own problem. To understand it this way is the understanding of the Buddha. How shall we resolve such a problem? It's a problem which came from hard and rigid minds. War is a problem born from hardheadedness. When we become hard it makes our world small and restricted. It makes our judgment narrow.

It is said that this universe is ten to twenty billion years old, while the earth is four and a half billion years old. Even given this nearly limitless age of the immense universe, we with narrow consideration only for our own convenience, put an arbitrary limit on some days and set up a deadline such as January fifteenth. Why do people who are supposed to be making the efforts to loosen hardened minds have to fix a date? Why did such a limiting time decision have to be made right then? I think this is a big problem. If the people who are supposed to resolve the hardheadedness add even more hardheaded thinking, the problem has no where to go.

Most everyone in the whole world agreed that Iraq's actions and thinking were mistaken, but even so, the United Nations put down a deadline of January fifteenth. I think probably many hearing this felt sad and disappointed. The United Nations was

created for the express purpose of keeping peace in the world. The people who are gathered there should be those with the deepest and greatest vow for keeping peace.

In that most important space of time when things needed careful working out, to put a limit on time—to do so and then to punish by attack—was truly all of our responsibility. Not only this, but if we had had the true strict eye it takes to see what is required for peace, we would have seen that even this clear view and deep commitment were not sufficient. In our minds, there was some place where a stricter critique should have been made.

The people of the whole world, in every single day, became more and more entangled in that hardened mind, the Persian Gulf War, with its oil spill spreading out further and further, and the missiles being fired, killing people one after another. It's said, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," but this is the way of the *ashuras*, those who can't believe in people, can't trust people any longer. This is what hell is, not something we fall into, but not to be able to believe in our most basic human character, that is hell.

If we can't see as far as our clear, true original nature, it is the same thing as having fallen into hell. To think only of one's own needs and work to solve only one's own problems is the way of the hungry ghost. If our minds are upset we get attached to the solution of our own small difficulties and don't see another person's perspective at all. This is the world of the beast. When our mind becomes agitated and irritated and we can't sit still without doing something aggressive to another person—we somehow have to attack or get back at someone—this is the beast or *ashura's* way of being.

While we are alive in this very life we fall continually into the worlds of the hungry ghosts and beasts and *ashuras*. While being active in demonstrating against war then tearing down buildings at the same time, causing other people a lot of trouble and making many suffer—this is also a way of the *ashura* from which it is very difficult to extricate oneself. We have to think

very carefully about this. It's not a matter of attacking someone else's actions, but rather to review our own behavior, to always return to living deeply in our most quiet mind. The people of the world are sharing in this same vow.

What is of the greatest importance is to put our mind into a clear order and a harmonious state. If our mind and breathing become disturbed and upset, we may have no second thoughts even about polluting our own most precious friend, the earth. We feel nothing threatening about doing it. This is the kind of human who is being produced one after another. This is truly a time when all the people of the whole world must deeply quiet their minds and ask, "What is true peace?" True peace comes from within the mind. From that peace comes deep patience, a sharp, clear judgment, and development of a wide view.

To bring peace to everyone is our continuing deepest vow. We chant daily for grace after death for all of those who have died in the war. As the Buddha said:

All the three worlds are my home and all the beings in  
this house are my children.





# Lay Buddhism

May 1991

The goal of *mahayana* Buddhism, also called lay Buddhism, is not to go off into the mountains and focus only on intensive meditation; but to take that meditative mind and give it life in one's daily functioning in society. This is the basis of lay Buddhism. In this very way Japanese Buddhism became widespread.

It's said traditionally that Buddhism moves eastward, and this Buddhism is now moving on to America and Europe. In this way the transplanting of the waves of Buddhist culture has taken place. However, if today we look back over what's taken place, especially in Zen, perhaps the form, the ritual of Zen has been passed along, but somehow that true deep understanding of mind seems to have been left behind.

The idea that just sitting *zazen* is Buddhism, simply observing the form, has become a common way of thinking. *Mahayana* Buddhism holds that mind is more important than form and system; the direct experience of mind is first and foremost. For this reason, no matter how much we observe the form, if the deep awakening of mind is not being experienced it becomes empty of essence, and the person practicing feels this clearly, and sadly is left with a deep sense of dissatisfaction. In this way, when we do *zazen* we feel energy which is taut and full within, but when we leave the sitting cushion we feel nothing at all. We are left with the sense that our daily life and our *zazen* are completely separate. While sitting *zazen* we think we feel something, but our problem

of mind is finding no clear resolution. Our daily life carries many problems with it, and we are often very heavily influenced by them—thrown around by the conditions in society. *Zazen* can seem like an oasis to run to, away from our busy, complicated daily lives. Many people have come to mistakenly see *zazen* in this way. Working on our firm mind becomes very much like the mere picture of the cake instead of the eating of the real thing.

*Mahayana* Buddhism holds as most important the deep understanding of the true mind. For this mind's awakening form and ritual aren't requirements. If we take this point to the extreme, the form of *zazen* is not even so important. Right now in our life in society, in the very midst of the busy, severe daily life work, if we don't insert those extraneous thoughts and can clearly maintain a sharp eye, we can see through things with sharp and objective sight. We can then constantly work on this clear, transparent mind. This is the point which is most important in *mahayana* Buddhism.

If people are well ripened, then they don't need to do *zazen*. It's not necessary for them. They can function at one hundred percent in the midst of the business of society and do so without their mind being upset by any of it. However, while saying this, when the slightest wave comes along, a beginner is like a small boat on a rough ocean which gets tossed and blown around, not only by the external problems in society but by his own internal problems as well. We are constantly being shrunk and tossed. Because that troubled and perturbed state of mind is persistent, the form of *zazen* is adopted and efforts are made to do something about this shaky state of mind.

*Zazen* is not some ultimate form, but something we do because we have to, a process which beginners have to go through. When the true, clear, transparent state of mind is realized, *zazen* is not necessary and time to do *zazen* should not even be available anymore. If we are giving one hundred percent of our time, our complete selves, to our work in society, there is no further need to work on harmonizing the mind through the posture of *zazen*.

This is the very lively, vivid expression of a ripened person of practice.

Holding *zazen* foremost, with a mind of compassion to do *zazen* because we absolutely know we have to, and then going out to those who are troubled in society is what's really important. If we grab onto *zazen* forever it brings about real problems. We know our own state of mind much better than anyone else. Whether our mind becomes upset or not, whether we are staying clear no matter what situation we find ourselves in, we know this for ourselves much better than someone else can know. If we can truly raise our mind to the place where we are undisturbed and clear in our sight no matter what comes along, this is the most wonderful world possible. If we are not careful we can easily become addicted to the medicine which we are using to cure our mind.

A *dojo* like Sogenji offers a place for realizing that true mind for those in the middle of this busy world. It offers the basic way. It's a place to allow people to realize that true mind. This is not a matter of observing some form, but finding constant refuge in that mind which is realized. This is the human foundation and the awakening which comes from that which is truly important, not the form.

After leaving a *dojo* like Sogenji, people's sense of the true mind thins out as time passes. That mind which is not tossed and turned by anything external, that actual awakening without mistake to this original, pure mind, this awareness becomes more and more pale. Only the form and patterns are remembered. Since the world of realization and essence become watered down, only the form and patterns remain clear.

If we do not vow deeply for the awakening of mind, the true way of carrying our mind, then what is *zazen*? What is the Buddha's way? We have to review this question frequently and see our own lives in this light, aligning our lives in the true way of the path of the Buddha; not delivered in some certain form or shape, but giving lively expression of the true mind in our everyday life.

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# Beyond the Ego

January 1992

During all of last year, there were many various difficult situations and events throughout the world. They included the Gulf War and the fall of the Soviet Union, as we all know well.

During the Gulf War, I talked on the phone with the pianist, Alexis Weissenberg, calling from Switzerland. When we first talked he said:

This Gulf War, it's a war of battling egos. In this century, in this culturally advanced period of history, now even at this final part of this century, our human suffering is still coming from the fact that people can't let go of their egos.

This is what I heard him say. I heard it as representative of all the voices of all the people in the world today.

At the end of the year, former astronaut Rusty Schweikart stopped by Sogenji on his way back from Moscow. He related that when he was about to depart from Moscow he looked out his hotel window and watched the snow falling. The snow which fell was blown upward again and swirled around in the wind between the buildings. It whirled left and right, and couldn't fall straight and downward naturally. He couldn't help seeing the inner fabric of the minds of the people of Moscow and of the Soviet Union perfectly expressed in the way the snow fell.

The ending of the sixty-nine-year-old regime of the Communist Party was probably news we could have expected, something bound to happen. As Confucius said in the ancient days:



Bread is more important than weapons.

In just this way, no matter how powerful the military may be, we can't get rid of the need for bread. People can't be taken care of in this way.

Confucius also said:

More important than bread is belief or trust.

No matter what a wonderful theory or system one might espouse, if the ego is what is making use of this system, if the ego is given top priority in the system, the people will lose their trust.

In past times, humans had an underlying deep faith in God. Today, however, we've lost this bright illumination of a belief in God, and lost that sense of a humanity backed by a God. We've established ego as a base, pushing forth our own egoistic opinions about things. But, no matter how wonderful one's egoistic opinions may be, they belong to a particular moment and situation and not something which extends throughout all of humankind.

In the teaching of Buddhism it says:

Our small-minded opinions roll around inside a small self. Our harmonious energy extends of itself throughout everything.

No matter how much we may satisfy the ego, the satisfaction finally decays, leaving us with sadness and an empty feeling. Especially when our egoistic opinions don't pass and our ego is shunned, all of our energy for doing something cools and we lose interest. We all have to let go of our own opinions for a little while. We have to realize and discover completely that belief which connects all humankind—to express it, to communicate it, and to make it our basis.

There was a poet named Ozaki Hosai who wrote the following poem:

Cutting my fingernails  
I have ten fingers!

He said, "While I was trimming my fingernails I didn't notice, but when I finished trimming them I looked at them for a long while and noticed as if for the first time: What a wonderful thing! There are ten fingers—neither too few nor too many of them! How mysterious! What strange and wonderful things we have received! They really work well, too! Any fine work, any difficult work, these fingers can do! They give birth to great joy, they give life to humans' abundant imagination. We have received truly amazing tools! They can hold chopsticks and a bowl, and we can eat rice with them. They can hold a hoe and dig a garden. They can work with complicated machinery. How mysterious these tools are! Despite having received these wonderful tools, we hardly notice them." Hosai was deeply moved.

Ozaki Hosai was a free-style poet who graduated from the best university in Japan, Tokyo University. He also worked as the head of a big company. In the middle of frantic economic conditions he wondered desperately, "Is there any real joy for humans?" Ozaki Hosai was disillusioned with society and how it completely left out the human heart and mind. He was disillusioned with the economic groups which had deserted the human mind. He was disillusioned with all possible jobs. Because he saw nothing giving rebirth to the human spirit or supporting humanity's great bright light, he threw away all of his possessions and went to travel and wander. He left his family, he gave up his house and all of his things, taking nothing. He owned nothing and was all alone.

He lived in a tiny house with no tools, no furniture and no household goods. The neighbors offered to bring him things but he refused because in order to receive them he needed a bowl, and he had none. He just put out both his hands and wrote:

I have no bowl  
I receive it with two hands

Today everything has become so convenient. If you go to the department store you can find anything you want lined up there.

Buy this! Buy that! In this way our eyes are pulled every which way. If we pay enough money we can not only obtain all kinds of sensational items but we can taste all the most incredible foods and flavors. If we just turn on the switch of the television or radio we can receive all kinds of news of the whole world instantly. If we merely dial the telephone we can talk to people all over the world. We seek all kinds of things outside of ourselves.

We all acquire lots of material goods and appliances: collecting this, collecting that, here and there, thinking we always need more things, always collecting one more new thing. Even if we accumulate lots of things, if we have no joy in being alive and human and if we don't have a truly alive imagination, what do we have?

If we have an active imagination, even if we don't own a thing we can give birth to anything. If we lose that imagination, we end up with a terrible lonely and melancholy empty feeling. That world which we seek, that world which everybody knows, but which we have yet to realize, we can receive it all because we have these wonderful hands. As Ozaki Hosai said:

I have no bowl  
I receive it with two hands

We have no containers, but from our mind within, where nothing is held, we can produce everything with our imagination. Even if we have no possessions, we can find great satisfaction within our mind.

Ozaki Hosai wrote further, saying:

Even when I cough  
I'm all alone!

Hearing this poem people will probably think of Ozaki Hosai, living just as he chose—all alone—and how when he became sick there was no one there to take care of him. They think that this is what you get when you live your life selfishly and only according to your own wishes. See, it's a lonely life after all! Probably people will take it in this way. Of course, since he lived alone when he was sick there was no one to hold up his back.

*Beyond the Ego*

There was, of course, no one to say, "Please drink this water." There was also no familiar doctor to come and call. He was truly alone and isolated. But still:

Even when I cough  
I'm all alone!

"ACHEEEEEEMMM" —even if nobody is here, even if nobody comes to help, I can cough all by myself. This "ACHEEEEEEMMM" is a sound of "I'm still alive! I'm right here still alive!" Even when all pleasures have been taken away—to be sick with AIDS or cancer; to have the joy of seeing with the eyes taken away; to lose the joy of hearing with the ears; to be deprived of that joy of feeling with the body; having our sense of smell snatched away; our sense of taste gone—losing all of the senses with which humans are usually blessed, at the end people sigh and know and say:

I don't need anything at all. It's all right being without anything. Just to be living, right here, right now, to be alive is enough.

"Still alive! Still alive, right here! This is enough!" This is what people all feel at the very end of life. Of course up until they reach this state of mind they've gone through unimaginable pain and suffering. They've felt resentment and felt deep anger. But our human place of resolution, the place where we all end up, is this very last razor's edge of life energy.

Even when I cough  
I'm all alone!

This one who is "alone" that Ozaki Hosai is writing about, is one who fills the universe, one who feels the heavens and earth. This is not that "one" who has many things, who has a luxurious life and responds to the desires of the ego and expresses the ego's opinions and is satisfied. This is that "one" who even without a single thing, even when deprived of all sources of pleasure, does not lose that brilliant source light of life energy. To realize this is



to realize the true source point of human beings.

While humans are still alive, the ego will never completely disappear. It is impossible to live completely separated from an ego.

However, having thought the ego was something absolute, we find out that it's only something which is wisplike in every moment and then immediately fades away. It is something which arises from moment to moment and is nothing of true substance. It does not disappear completely, but it is not the original nature.

If we were to give an example of something like it, it would be like that huge expanding blue sky, clear and transparent. Our ego-consciousness (at this moment or that moment) is like something which sends out puffs of clouds fluffily sailing across that huge blue sky. For us, that ego-mind which comes forth at various moments is that which we think is absolute and has substance. None of us looks up at that blue sky, sees those clouds, and thinks they are fixed and absolute. This is because we know the true nature of the blue sky. We know that the clouds will at some time be blown away and disappear—that they are only moments of scenery up in the sky—and because we are all aware of this, when the blue sky is blocked by a cloud we're not fooled that the blue sky is no longer there.

Our true nature is just like this. We can't get rid of that ego completely and still live. But we can recognize that it is something transient and changing from moment to moment and become one with its scenery, moving along with it, knowing that our ego consciousness is something which varies from moment to moment.

Our mind is originally totally clear and uncluttered. This clear, transparent mind receives and accepts the scenery of each different moment and expresses it in the mind of each of those moments. The Buddha taught this from his own direct experience. He said:

How wondrous, how wondrous! All beings are from their origin endowed with the bright, clear nature!



### *Beyond the Ego*

The Buddha was deeply moved by this experience of going beyond the ego, touching directly humanity's original source.

There is a big difference depending on whether we've realized this true mind or not, to have an ego and yet not be attached to it, or to be attached to our ego and be unable to move in its heaviness. There is a big difference here. If we are always seeing and hearing from under the piled-up layers of ego we only see a world made crooked by the weight of the ego.

If we can encounter that true deep mind beyond the ego and then give free and full energy to its expression, we can give great, free life to our days, free from any attachment to our ego, using our imagination fully to push that ego wide open and discover that which connects all of humankind.

The harmonious mind of its own spreads throughout  
all the directions.

To give birth to that kind of world where all humans are truly joining hands and energy is true peace.

If our minds are noisy and irritated, this won't be able to happen. Especially at this time, it is important to quiet our minds, and with that quiet mind to see clearly through all things, for each person to take responsibility in the understanding and walking of that path which humans should truly walk. This must be seen clearly and acted on energetically.



# The Way of Zazen

Sussokan

Every year when December approaches, monks everywhere tremble in anticipation of the arrival of the *rohatsu oesshin*. In Zen *dojos* everywhere people intensify their training energy in preparation for this *oesshin*, held from the first to the eighth of December. The *rohatsu oesshin* is the consummation of a year's training, a time when everyone faces the final reckoning of a year of practice.

The Buddha was enlightened on the eighth of December when he looked up at the morning star, the planet we call Venus. The brightness of this planet was seen by Buddha from the depths of one week of *samadhi*. The Buddha received that brightness with the same eyes of *zazen* that enable us also to realize perfect enlightenment.

One week straight of this deepest possible *samadhi* was burst through by the brilliance of that morning star. A whole week's experience of that world of complete spiritual death, the great death, that state of mind of the world beyond death. Into that world burst the brightness of the morning star, plunging into the Buddha's eyes and giving rebirth to the Buddha's consciousness.

He cried:

That's it! That's it! That's it! That's me! That's me that's shining so brilliantly!

How deeply he was moved and what wonder he felt. From this comes all of the Buddha's *Dharma*. From within this state of mind the Buddha said:

How wondrous, how wondrous! All beings are endowed with this pure nature! What a wondrous, astonishing thing has been realized! All the ten thousand things, all the flowers, all the trees, all the rocks, all things everywhere are shining brilliantly! What an amazing thing! It's the same landscape, but how brilliantly it is illuminated! What freshness in everything!

From within this deep illumination of the mind of Buddha all of the Buddha's wisdom was born. All of Zen is held within the deep impression of the Buddha's mind at that moment.

People vow to experience this very same experience of the Buddha as they approach the *robatsu osesshin*. In every single Zen *dojo* people put their lives on the line to be able to experience the exact same state of mind, on the eighth of December, as that of the Buddha. This is the firm vow with which they come to the *robatsu osesshin*.

There is a record of Hakuin Zenji's teachings called the *Robatsu Jissu*. This is a collection of his teachings given on each evening of the *robatsu osesshin* week. Hakuin Zenji taught from his own experience to encourage his disciples and to give them energy for their practice. This collection of teachings is the work of Hakuin's disciple, Torei Zenji. It is not published in general and is used only in the *zendos* for the monks because of its strictness and severity. In the text we find written the way to do *zazen*, the way of entering *samadhi*, and the way of breathing (*sussokan*). They are all taught in great detail.

I would like to comment on Hakuin Zenji's teaching, using the *Robatsu Jissu* text, adding my own experiences in the hope that it will be helpful for each person's practice.

We begin by using the text of Hakuin's teaching from the first night of the *robatsu osesshin*. He spoke to the many disciples lined up in front of him in this way:

## *The Way of Zazen*

For those who wish to enter deep *samadhi*, it is best to put down thick cushions, sit in full lotus and wear loose clothes. Make your spine straight and your posture erect but comfortable. Begin by doing *sussokan*, the best possible way for entering deep *samadhi*, focusing your *ki* in your *tanden* (lower abdomen). Next, concentrate intensely on your koan until you dig out the roots of your self-conscious awareness completely. If you then continue to practice *zazen* day after day, *kensho* will be realized as certainly as you hit the ground when you strike at it. Put everything you have into it.

Deep *samadhi*, deep *samadhi*. We all speak about *kensho*, but if we don't develop our *samadhi*, don't work inventively on developing our deep *samadhi*, it all becomes something far away up in the sky.

The Sixth Patriarch and Rinzai Zenji both taught that only *kensho* was of greatest importance and that *samadhi* and liberation were not to be considered as problems. They said that there is only *kensho* to be concerned with and that is all that is necessary; that enlightenment is the most important thing and that this is the essential point of Zen.

The experience of the Buddha was deep enlightenment. When he saw the morning star he experienced his true nature clearly. Without such a thing there is no Zen or *Buddhadharma*. But, just to say *kensho* doesn't mean that we can realize it.

This is not an era of such spiritual clarity. It's a time when there is a flooding of information into all parts of society, and our daily life is complicated and confusing. Our minds have a very difficult time feeling things deeply. If our minds don't become truly purified and lucid then *kensho* is impossible. If our antennas are completely coated with rust, no matter what signals may come along they can't be picked up. If our mirror is not clear, no matter how wonderful the scenery, it cannot be reflected. The problem is the degree to which our minds are purified and unattached. Only to the degree to which they are clear and lucid can we receive these signals.



This does not mean that the goal is to develop our own quiet world. The goal is to realize one's true nature. For doing this we need to develop deep *samadhi*. For this reason people of training constantly need to concentrate on their *zazen* and employ this mind of practice as the base of their daily life and all activity.

Hakuin began his teaching:

For those who wish to enter deep *samadhi*.

The Sixth Patriarch gave us a concise definition of *samadhi*, teaching that *samadhi* is:

To detach oneself from all external stimulation and to be undisturbed within.

When we look outside we see trees, flowers, mountains, and people, and we cannot erase this scenery. We cannot erase the things which appear before us. We can't "close" our ears, and we feel many things—hot, cold, joy, and pain—and smell fragrances. In this way we live totally connected with the environment that surrounds us; we cannot separate ourselves from it.

The most important thing is not to be attached to that environment. This does not mean to cover our eyes, it does not mean to cover our ears, it does not mean to stop smelling, nor does it mean to stop feeling. It means that our minds must become taut and concentrated beyond all of these stimulations. It means not to be distracted, not to use our minds meaninglessly, not to loosen our attention. It means to find our center and with our total concentration to gather our focused energy.

Not to be attached to external form, not to be unsettled within, not to think this and that, not to be cluttered with extraneous things, not to think about gain and loss and whether we are happy or sad. This can be called Zen. We are always thinking something in our minds. If we always leave our minds full of these thoughts our minds will never become clear, but we also cannot instruct our minds to stop thinking. This means that we should always keep our minds taut and perfectly attentive.

## *The Way of Zen*

Hakuin gave us the instruction for *sussokan*, which has the truly great function of clearing the mind. He said:

In any case do not be attached to the outside world, and within our minds do not think of this and that. To have our minds precisely concentrated only on what we are doing, this is what is called deep *samadhi*.

As Hakuin instructed:

For those who wish to enter deep *samadhi*, it is best to put down thick cushions, sit in full lotus and wear loose clothes.

For those who wish to enter deep *samadhi* a thicker cushion is best. For someone who is only going to sit for ten to thirty minutes a thick cushion may not be so necessary, but here at Sogenji we may sit for as many as twelve hours, and if we continue this for a week of *osesshin*, a thin cushion will not be sufficient. Therefore it is best to sit down on a thick cushion.

Put your legs in full lotus. For *zazen* there is both half and full lotus. If at all possible full lotus is preferable. Putting up both legs carefully and tucking them in deeply is best. It's best because your legs don't move out of position. For those doing half lotus it is easier to injure your legs. If you sit for a long time your legs may hurt and you will want to move them. If you move your legs your body's center line becomes crooked. If you sit in a crooked way for an extended time your balance becomes lost and in extreme cases your legs become and remain numb. In the end it becomes impossible even to do *zazen*. This happens because people don't put their legs up deeply and carefully into the correct position. When you tuck them in deeply you may feel pain at the beginning. *Zazen* is one form of yoga, and you must not go against your muscle structure. If you want to sit in a way in which your legs do not go against your muscle structure, you must tuck them in deeply. To put your legs up loosely will not work; they must be tucked as far up on your thighs as possible.

## MORNING DEWDROPS OF THE MIND

Push out your lower abdomen (*tanden*) as far as possible and sit in this position.



To sit in loose clothing is preferable. If you constrict your body in any way your breathing becomes difficult. People who wear tight belts or tight trousers should loosen them as much as possible. Straighten your backbone and stretch it up towards the sky. A line between your knees forms one side of an equilateral triangle. Put your pelvis at the opposite apex of the triangle and stretch your spine up from that point. In this way you make your spine erect and set your neck and head on top of the spine. Tuck in your chin and poke the top of your head straight up into the sky and the heaviness of your head will decrease. If you do

## *The Way of Zazen*

this your balance will improve. If you sit like this your abdomen will naturally be pushed forward, and also because your backbone is straight, your abdomen will move forward.

Hakuin further instructed, saying:

Make your spine straight and your posture erect but comfortable.

This is the best way to sit. People who see you sitting *zazen* should naturally feel a refreshed and bracing feeling. If you stretch up too much it looks uncomfortable. If the way you sit gives a person who is looking at you a messy and uncomfortable feeling, this is not the right posture. People who see you should get a refreshed and vibrant feeling.

Hakuin instructed his disciples saying:

Begin by doing *sussokan*, the best possible way for entering deep *samadhi*, focusing your *ki* in your *tanden*.

These words are from Hakuin's very own experience, and because Hakuin's *sussokan* is a way of breathing with the *tanden*, it is the same as the way of breathing taught by the Buddha. Of course Hakuin was not the first to discover this! In India from ancient times until today it has been continued. In the practice of Zen, *sussokan* was never given much emphasis. Considered as something obvious, it was not thought of as something that was needed to be taught.

From doing extreme training, Hakuin had problems with his sympathetic nervous system. His *ki* would rise to his shoulders and he would become emotionally unstable. He discovered that by doing *sussokan* he could settle his mind and in this way he realized that *sussokan* could be practiced to develop *ki*. He taught *sussokan* to everyone from beginners to well-ripened people of longtime practice. This *sussokan* must be well developed. So, Hakuin instructed:

Begin by doing *sussokan*, the best possible way for entering deep *samadhi*, focusing your *ki* in your *tanden*.

He makes it sound simple, but there are many types of *samadhi*. In yoga there are many ways of entering *samadhi*, but among these the best way to enter *samadhi* is *sussokan*. Hakuin has taught us this from his own experience.

Everyone who comes to Sogenji is taught *sussokan* as the base of their practice, and for those who work with it using it in their daily life is a matter of course. One can easily forget the correct way to do *sussokan* so it is best to review it constantly and thoroughly.

The way to begin doing *sussokan* is as I have just explained:

First check your *zazen* posture. Then if your body is in the correct posture remove all tension and stretch the spine toward the sky. Remove all tension from the neck muscles and release all tension in your arms as well.

When you do this you will just become like the skeleton hanging in the science classroom, tied from its head and with its body loosely dangling.

In this relaxed condition:

Quietly exhale, focusing your concentration on the exhalation from your *tanden*.

Your *tanden* is that place approximately one and a half inches below your navel which you can feel if you press there. Here is the main center of the sympathetic nervous system. The source of human's *ki* can also be found here. If you work with this place thoroughly your *ki* will become fully developed.

If you are not centered in your *tanden*, your energy level falls easily, and your *ki* goes high up into your shoulders. It may continue into the neck muscles and your head may begin to tighten and hurt. Finally you may become dizzy, excited, and start crying for no reason or become irritated, finding it difficult to settle down. If this happens, your whole body starts trembling. From a disturbance of the sympathetic nervous system you may become neurotic. *Sussokan* is the best way to keep the *ki* down.



Having relaxed all the tension in your body:

Focus on the lower abdomen, as if you were steadily blowing your breath from this place and, pulling your belly in, quietly exhale.

Exhale for as long as possible, to the very end of the breath and until your belly becomes completely flat.

When you come to the very end of the breath, naturally, without thinking, the inhalation will follow and your belly will fill up and expand in front of you. As your belly expands the inhalation comes in naturally. There is no need to suck in an inhalation.

Very comfortably:

Focus on a complete exhalation.

As your belly expands in front of you:

Inhale accordingly.

It's just like an eyedropper. There is a rubber bulb on top of a hollow glass tube. When you press the bulb the air goes out, and when you put it into water and let go of it the water is sucked into the glass tube. This is how the eyedropper works. In the same way, flattening your belly completely is the way to exhale the breath, and the swelling out of your abdomen at inhalation is the same as letting go of the eyedropper's rubber bulb: air flows in naturally.

When you let go of your exhalation your abdomen naturally fills up again and with that action you inhale. Don't suck in air. If you do it naturally there should be almost no tension in the shoulders whatsoever and the air comes in easily. In a short time sufficient air will easily be inhaled.

If you become too tense or too self-conscious it becomes very difficult. If you are tense in your diaphragm your breath gets stopped there. Almost everyone stops his or her breath at the diaphragm and almost everyone tries to force his or her breath further from there. Getting rid of this forced power is one of the big problems at the beginning of learning *sussokan*.

## MORNING DEWDROPS OF THE MIND

At the beginning of *zazen* it helps to do this deep abdominal breathing up to ten times. To get rid of self-consciousness, you go out to the breath's final point as quietly as possible, and in doing this you work slowly on focusing and using your *tanden*.

As you breathe out:

Add the counting of one, two, three, up to ten. One count on each breath.

As you breathe out, count:

Oooooooooooooooooone . . .

Twoooooooooooooooo . . .

Threeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee . . .

Keep going until the count of ten and then return to one again. This is *sussokan*.

While counting your breaths you concentrate on the breaths constantly. It is important to follow these breaths with your concentration. By following these breaths carefully your concentration deepens, and because you are concentrating so totally, even when you look at the outside world you are no longer so attached to it—because your concentration is on your breath and counting, the external world doesn't interfere. Even if there are sounds around you, if your concentration is deep, you hardly notice them, or smells, flavors, and other external stimulations. It is the same with feelings, and especially the extraneous thoughts of this and that. These thoughts also decrease greatly.

Remember:

Focus totally on the breath and the counting.

And, just as the Sixth Patriarch taught:

Detach oneself from all external stimulation and be undisturbed within.

This detachment happens in conjunction with the *sussokan*. You become separated from the external world and unattached to its sounds and sights. Then your mind becomes free of attachment

to extraneous thoughts. Here you find a truly highly-developed, taut state of mind within.

Daruma Daishi said:

Not concerned with outer things,  
without having any troubles inside, if  
one's mind is like a wall he would at  
the same time be in the Tao (truth).

This does not mean to become tense and tight in the breathing. It means to go to the ultimate point of each breath and not to be swayed by external things. There is then no place for any extraneous thing to be found—no trace, no crack. This is the world of *zazen*, the world of the Buddha's *samadhi*.

Hakuin taught:

Begin by doing *sussokan*, the best possible way for entering deep *samadhi*, focusing your *ki* in your *tanden*.

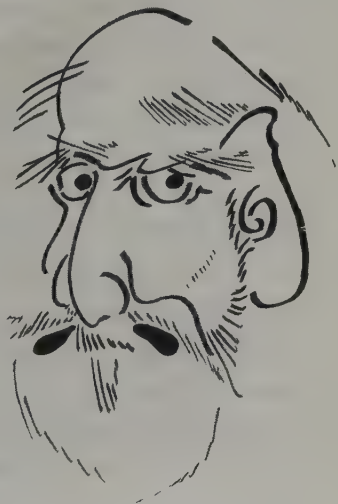
At the beginning, *sussokan* feels very undependable but it's important not to stop and quit. Once you have begun your efforts you must go all the way to the final end. For this, *osesshin* is the best time.

If you do two or three *osesshins* almost anyone can master this *sussokan*. Anybody can do this much.

Seeing how far you can go in using the *sussokan* in your daily life is up to each person's individual efforts. But, if you are living out in society, sitting and then stopping again, it is very difficult to master *sussokan*. The practice is best when done on a regular basis.

*Sussokan* is a point of practice which should be mastered in a short time. Once you have mastered it and made it your own, you won't forget it. Once it has ripened and you have tasted the flavor of its deep state you won't forget it.

Even though *sussokan* may feel unreliable and powerless at



first, if you patiently and creatively work on it, little by little your breath will come thoroughly from your abdomen. After you exhale totally you allow the abdomen to expand in front of you. Repeat this process over and over. At the beginning of *zazen* repeat it ten times. After that don't put any tension or self-conscious effort into it. Let it move naturally.

Although your breath may feel rather shallow when you first begin, in fact, if you look at it in comparison to the breath in usual daily life, it is much deeper. If you do this breathing over and over you develop it thoroughly. From that seemingly undeveloped abdomen a strong and energetic *ki* will come.

It is easy to be full of scattered *ki* which rises to the upper part of your body. But, with regular *sussokan* it can easily be gathered in the *tanden* and can then be felt as a strong and energetic *ki*. You can't make this strong *ki* through force. If you try to force it, it will get stopped in the diaphragm and your breath will become shorter and more difficult. You have to proceed with patient effort.

In the beginning it does not go well but, little by little, as you get used to doing it, not only while doing *zazen*, but also while doing your work and other activities, it will continue. Even when you are eating you are able to keep the concentration going. When you come to this point your *ki* becomes fuller and fuller. Finally, when you are exhaling and inhaling, the base of your *tanden* gives you a continuous strong supply of *ki* because you are breathing with your abdomen.

When your *ki* becomes truly well-developed and is taut and full, your abdomen hardly moves at all. This is because you have nearly reached the ultimate point of your concentration. Especially at this point you must not let go of your efforts and must keep your concentration going, adding even more energy. If you do this your abdomen becomes fuller and more taut.

Here Hakuin instructs:

Begin by doing *sussokan*, the best possible way for entering deep *samadhi*, focusing your *ki* in your *tanden*. Next, con-



## *The Way of Zen*

concentrate intensely on your koan until you dig out the roots of your self-conscious awareness completely.

Your inner places, your deep mind, become totally fulfilled, and your abdomen also becomes full of active energy. When you are in this state of mind you can for the first time work on a koan. Working without a koan is also fine. People of old have taught us that without a koan you can reach enlightenment.

From deep within yourself focus carefully on the place where the breath arises. Watch that source point attentively.

That very point from which the breath is born, watch that point. Then with the question, "What is this? What is this? What is this?" see it thoroughly. That *ki* which is constantly born anew from within us is never used up, it never runs out. Coming from that *ki*, one after another the breaths are born:

Grasping that source point firmly focus your concentration and consciousness on the question, "What is this?"

At the beginning you were counting numbers but finally, if the breath becomes taut and full, the counting does not matter. With that full flow of *ki* you ask the question, "What is this?" With this concentration you cut deeply within. You dig on constantly in the direction of the source of the breath. Keeping going in the direction of the source point of the breath, you cut away as you delve towards it. If you do this wholeheartedly you will almost completely lose track of the outside world. Your own centered mind will have no extraneous thoughts, only those breaths which come one after the other, until the place where there is even no consciousness of asking the question, "What is this?" It is as if you were glaring into it, never taking your eyes away.

Your state of mind truly changes into an expansive one. This fulfilled state of mind is like the deep, deep ocean, but it is not like a dark hole. In a state of clear transparency you are embraced in total illuminating brilliance. Even the awareness of this is almost completely gone and only the fulfilled taut feeling is left.



This state of mind deepens and deepens and finally that state of mind explodes, and it too falls off completely. This is called cutting away the deep roots. This is what Hakuin is talking about when he instructs:

Next, concentrate intensely on your koan until you dig out the roots of your self-conscious awareness completely.

Going through this cutting of the roots must be done first; only after that can you experience the same state of mind that the Buddha was able to realize and at that time know, for the first time, that place from which the Buddha's reborn consciousness arose. That very instant when he saw the morning star, that very world into which he jumped, is no different from the cutting away of those deepest roots.

At the ultimate point it is not death, but the fulfilled and transparent clarity which is truly sharp, and the life which is pure from within. In relating to the outside world it is like being completely reborn. That reborn energy is of great strength and expands throughout the external world as well. This is the experience which the Buddha described. This is the true mind, the original mind which he realized was born from within.

One's original mind is that clear ultimate point, the very source point of that true mind. That which was not yet functioning awakens to the external world, and in every single thing it meets, it is stimulated and works accordingly. That point where it begins to function is of the greatest importance. If that function doesn't arise, then the experience's meaning dies, and that *zazen*, done so carefully, becomes meaningless.

When that brand-new fresh consciousness is reborn from within, when you are awakened to the true life within, you become the same as the Buddha. This happens not only in the midst of *samadhi*, but it is the very substance of *kensho*. With it comes the most important point of Zen and the *Buddhadharma*.

Yet, only when this expands into the external world does this true world of understanding become meaningful. For this we

## *The Way of Zazen*

cannot be in a hurry. It is a matter of how far we can go in developing our full and taut energy. This is the total of everything. Since we are realizing this in the context of the bustle and stimulations of the external world, if we are in a hurry it is proof that we have not yet thrown away all external things. To do this completely is of the greatest importance and to work with this point, no matter how far we have to go, is the ultimate point of *zazen*.

Hakuin concluded with:

If you then continue to practice *zazen* day after day, *kensho* will be realized as certainly as you hit the ground when you strike at it. Put everything you have into it.

He said this not meaning to say how many years we must make efforts, nor how many months or days are necessary. According to each person's efforts and energy it develops. According to each person's power of concentration it deepens. There is no calculation that can be made. It can't be said that because we worked this many hours we will have these results.

Our consciousness being totally reborn is our goal. Heading towards that goal and using our total energy in its pursuit is what has to be done. Even if we make efforts and our goal is not realized, it is as if we strike the ground with our hand. Without fail enlightenment can be realized. We can, without fail, realize enlightenment. Hakuin teaches this from his own experience. Everyone, all of us, can realize *kensho*. Anyone can realize this state of mind and anyone can be reborn from this state of mind. In this way Hakuin teaches us.



## Glossary

**Abbot:** The teacher, head of, and person responsible for a temple.

**Ashuras:** One of the six realms of beings; a state of mind of anger, mistrust, violence, and not believing.

**Banshu:** The area of Hyogo Prefecture in Japan where Bankei Zenji taught “unborn Zen” which teaches one to simply realize that mind prior to any thoughts, expectations, or planning.

**Bodhisattva:** One who has realized or awakened the innate *bodhisattva* nature, and vows to liberate all beings even before he/she has realized his/her own enlightenment.

**Bodhidharma:** The twenty-eighth Patriarch in line from the Buddha, the first Patriarch of Zen. Born a prince in India, he received orders from his teacher to cross from India to China teaching the actual practice of awakening directly to one’s clear, pure nature through practice, not through *sutras* and studying. He was the first to give us the *zazen* rule, “Cutting all connections with the outside, all concerns within, making one’s mind like a firm tall wall, one is at one with the path.” He lived in the sixth century, the same time as St. Benedict, who established rules for Christian monastic practice. See Patriarch.

**Buddha Nature:** The nature of humans prior to ego. The clear, equal, mutually respecting mind beyond all distinctions.

**Buddhadharma:** See *Dharma*.

**Completely Realized:** The state of being awakened to one’s true nature; being rid of one’s mind’s blocks, attachments, and the delusion of one’s small mind.

## MORNING DEWDROPS OF THE MIND

Daruma Daishi: See Bodhidharma.

*Dharma*: The laws of the mind to which the Buddha was awakened; the laws that govern the existence with which each person is endowed. While each person is still individually different, each also has a unifying, undifferentiated mind.

*Dojo*: A Zen monastery; a place to clarify the Buddha nature.

Ego: The relative, dualistic self.

Enlightenment: The awakening to one's true nature, prior to ego. Ego is like the transient waves on the water's surface; one's Buddha nature is the entire body of water.

Extraneous Thoughts: Thoughts without direction or purpose.

Full Lotus: The sitting posture in which one puts one's right foot on the left thigh and one's left foot on the right thigh, with the soles of the feet facing upward to the sky. Either foot can be on top.

Great Death: The complete separation from self-conscious awareness.

Half Lotus: The sitting posture in which one puts one's left foot on the right thigh with the right leg below the left leg. The legs can also be reversed.

Hakuin Zenji: (1685–1768). Japanese Zen Master born in Shizuoka Prefecture at the foot of Mt. Fuji. He wrote the *Song of Zazen* as well as many easy-to-understand books and letters and also made Zen drawings. His clear teaching was that "all beings are from the origin Buddhas." He taught this in the *Song of Zazen* which was written in the common language of his time (not in Chinese characters which only the higher classes could read).

*Hondo*: The hall where Dharma teaching and ceremonies are held.

Hungry Ghost: One of the six realms of beings; the state of mind of constant craving and never being satisfied.



## Glossary

**Karma:** A way of looking at the world from a religious viewpoint, taught from the time of ancient India, in which one's future is decided by one's good and bad deeds. It relates to all people, not just Buddhists.

**Kawaguchi, Ekai:** (1866–1945). The first Japanese to enter Tibet when it was still forbidden. He risked his life to bring the pure, Tibetan, *mahayana* teachings to Japan where Buddhism was very much influenced by the Chinese teachings of Confucianism and Taoism.

**Kensho:** See Enlightenment.

**Ki:** A universal force that constitutes, binds, and moves all things. In the human body it manifests as vitality. This vitality may be enhanced by good nutrition and breath work, through *tanden* breathing and other exercises.

**Koan:** Specific words and experiences of the ancients which cannot be solved by logic or rational thought. People of Zen training use them to cut dualistic thinking, awaken to their Buddha nature, and rid themselves of ego.

**Kusinara:** (Kushinagara) One of four holy Buddhist sites in India; the place where the Buddha entered complete nirvana.

**Liberated:** Through enlightenment, the state of being rid of one's binding attachments; being free to be spontaneous and intuitive, which attachment obstructs.

**Miso:** Japanese fermented, salty bean paste used for soup and flavoring.

**Nen:** Mind of right now; a single mind instant without any added associations.

**Nirvana:** The state of having extinguished the flames of greed, ignorance, and anger.

## MORNING DEWDROPS OF THE MIND

Noisy Mind: Random thoughts without direction which arise at any moment.

One Hundred and Eight Desires: A way of saying, "human's countless, endless desires."

Original Nature: That which everyone is endowed with and shares, and which unifies all beings at all times.

*Osesshin*: One week of continuous *zazen* with breaks only for *sutras*, eating, and sleeping. Its purpose is to intensely clarify one's true nature.

Path: According to the Buddha's teachings, expressing the teachings with one's own body without any idea of doing so, and living every day in this way.

Patriarchs: Those who have transmitted to their disciples the true teachings which they have experienced and which have been confirmed by their masters.

Practice: (verb). To confirm and clarify that same awakening of the Buddha to human's true, original nature, working creatively and inventively and with one's own experience.

Rikyu, Sen No: (1522–1591). The Japanese teacher who established the foundation for the modern discipline of *Chado*, the way of tea.

*Rinzai Zen*: The line of Zen teaching descending from Rinzai Gigen Zenji, which uses koans and is often described as "Shogun Zen."

Rinzai Gigen Zenji: (Died 867). Heir of Obaku and founder of the Rinzai Zen Sect. He was the twenty-eighth Patriarch after Bodhidharma. His Zen quality was that of a "general"—strong, fearless, and swift. See Patriarchs.

*Robatsu Osesshin*: The strictest, one-week *sesshin* of the year, held during the coldest season to honor the awakening of the Buddha on December 8th.

## Glossary

*Roshi*: Zen master.

*Samadhi*: The state of forgetting one's own heaviness; becoming one with time, place, and circumstances; becoming one with what one is doing; that which comes forth when one becomes the life of the moment.

*Sanzen*: The encounter with a Zen master in which *sussokan* and the koans of the Patriarchs become one's own life, and one expresses this awakening and awareness, and receives the hammering out of impurities from the teacher.

Self-consciousness: See Ego.

*Sesshin*: See *Osesshin*.

Shakyamuni: (567 B.C.—433 B.C.). The Buddha, the awakened one, the sage of the Shakyas. Shakyamuni came from a clan in India known as the Shakya clan.

Showa Era: The period of time in Japan from 1924 to 1988.

Sixth Patriarch: The sixth Patriarch after Bodhidharma. See Patriarchs.

*Sussokan*: Refer to the last chapter of this book for a detailed description of this method of *zazen* of counting one's breath.

*Sutra*: The teachings which tell of the truth to which Shakyamuni was enlightened.

*Taiko*: The large drum which announces special events in the *bondo*.

*Tanden*: A point in the body, approximately one and a half inches below the naval and one and a half inches deep, considered the physiological, psychic, and spiritual center. *Tanden* cultivation is closely related to breath and mind-intent for the development of *ki*. See *Ki*.

*Tathagatha*: The Buddha, the fully enlightened Buddha; the term the historical Buddha used in referring to himself.

## MORNING DEWDROPS OF THE MIND

Ten Directions: North, south, east, west, the four directions in between, up, and down.

Three Worlds: The world of desire (attachment to physical cravings and desires); the world of form (attachment to physical things, gain, and loss); and the formless world (world of artists, poets, musicians, people with imagination and spiritual base).

Training: See Practice.

True Character: The nature of Buddha mind.

True Mind: See Buddha nature.

True Nature: See Buddha nature.

True Source Point: The place of no heaviness of self when one pierces all ten directions and the three periods of time.

*Zazen*: Meditation; sitting in which one cuts all connections with the external world and lets go of all concerns within.

Zen: The name for each individual's true, original mind and substance.

*Zenji*: Patriarch. See Patriarchs.

*Zendo*: The meditation hall in which monks live and people practice *zazen*.









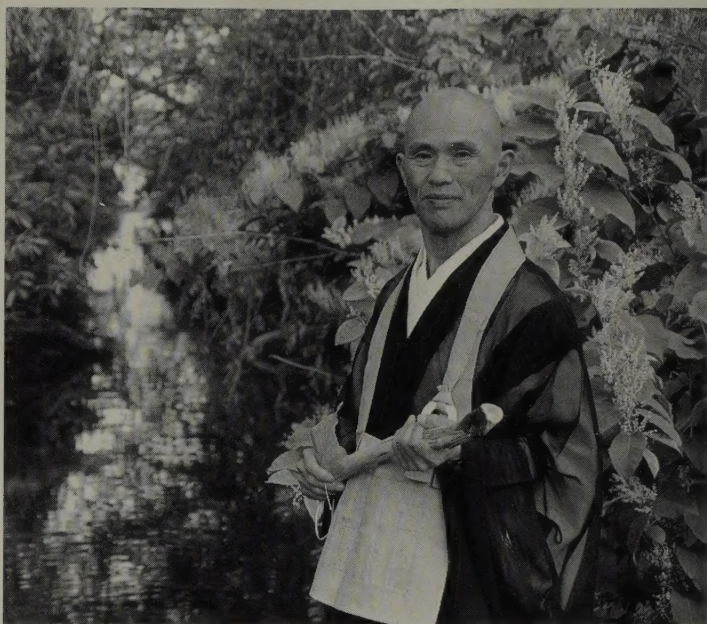




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### Shodo Harada Roshi

In 1988, Shodo Harada Roshi, abbot of Sogenji, a Rinzai Zen temple in Okayama, Japan, began writing a newsletter for students who lived and trained at Sogenji and had since returned to their home countries. The newsletter was started to support its readers in their practice, encouraging them to keep alive what they learned at Sogenji. Collected here for the first time, Harada Roshi's writings emphasize creative and inventive participation in every moment of life. Delightful, thought-provoking, and poignant, these essays blend living in today's world with the teachings of the Buddha.

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