

Chapter 6

ZAZEN WASAN

(A SONG OF ZAZEN)

Zazen Wasan was written by Master Hakuin Ekaku so that people in general may understand the essence of zazen. Therefore, it is clear and to the point. It is the quickest and simplest way to understand what zazen is. In addition, it is comparatively easy for us to understand its content, as it is presented to us in the form of verse so as to make it more convenient for us to recite it aloud daily. For these reasons, this verse has become well known to Zen students. It is common for them to recite it in unison before or after the meetings of Zen Associations and on other similar religious occasions.

I think it important to introduce some parts of the verse in order to make it easy for you to understand zazen. As a rule, I should say something about Master Hakuin's life at this point, but as he is so famous I will instead go directly into his verse below.

All beings are primarily Buddhas,
Like water and ice,
There is no ice apart from water.
There are no Buddhas apart from beings.

Shakyamuni sat under a bodhi tree, where, upon seeing a morning star at dawn, he was enlightened to the truth: "All beings are without exception endowed with Buddha-nature." To clarify the essence of this realization and to accommodate the vast variety of human beings, he left eighty-four thousand doctrines in over five thousand forty volumes of sutras. It is not too much to say that the

statement of the opening line, “All beings are primarily Buddhas,” can be called the primary statement of the essence of Buddhism.

According to scholars of religion, religion means the completion of the individual as the Whole. It makes it possible for each person to lead a human life as an individual who is also one with the Whole. Kato Genchi and other scholars like him contend that religion consists of two types: those religions which differentiate God from Man and those religions which equate God with Man. For instance, Christianity belongs to the first type where the distinction between God and Man pertains to the absolute distance between them. In Christianity the individual wishes to be saved by means of prayers which form the method of conforming with the Whole. Our Zen belongs to the second type of religion where equating Man with God pertains to the essential oneness of God and Man. In it the method of seeing into the oneness of the individual and the Whole is adopted, and by means of this method the distinction between the two is transcended.

The words “All beings are primarily Buddhas” mean nothing other than the fact that the individual is originally the Whole. What we should note here is the insertion of the word “primarily” between “all beings” and “Buddhas.” This word corresponds to the strongly affirmative phrase “none other than” found in the last line of the verse reading, “This body is none other than a Buddha.” Between the expressions “primarily” and “nothing other than,” there is a subtle difference in meaning. This difference pertains to the distinction between those who are not yet aware of their original Buddha-natures and those who have been already fully awakened to their own Buddha-natures, even though human beings are all essentially equal in Buddha-nature and invested with absolute value as Buddhas. A good comparison is the difference between water and ice.

Water becomes ice if frozen; ice becomes water if melted. Between ice and water there should be no essential difference. However, externally speaking, water is flexible, flows freely, and becomes square or round in form according to the shape of its

container, whereas ice is rigid and fixed in form. Water and ice are thus very different.

Ninomiya Sontoku¹ also writes in his work *Yawa*:

The Great Way is comparable to water. It enriches the world without being attached to any thing. But, if that valuable Great Way is written about and contained in a book, it ceases to enrich the world and becomes a useless thing to the world. It is as if water were turned into ice.

Well, the Buddhist scriptures have become something like ice. If you want them to be useful to the world you should melt their frozen pages with the warmth of your mind. Unless they are turned into water as they originally are, they will fail to enrich the world and will indeed remain useless.

We are primarily endowed with Buddha-nature, which is like the water that enriches the world. However, our Buddha-nature became frozen into rigid egos before we knew it. As long as we have egos we always find others in opposition to us. And thus we have come to live in perpetual conflict with them in clumsy and contradictory manners. “Buddha” (Hotoke) is said to mean “to come loose” (*hodokeru*). It is true that if the ego which is as hard as a piece of ice is melted, it will turn into Buddha, as free flowing as water.

Sontoku said that each attempt at commenting on the ice-like Buddhist scriptures meant adding another icicle to them. He told us that instead of doing such a useless thing we should turn our egos into water as they originally were by melting them with the warmth of our mind. It goes without saying that the method of melting the ice of our egos into water, as they originally are, lies in samadhi. We must prove ourselves to be Buddhas as we naturally are while immersed in samadhi.

Well, we are primarily Buddhas and are qualified to be the Absolute, which is nothing other than Buddha. The only reason why our virtues as Buddhas do not reveal themselves is because we have become frozen like ice. However, as there is no ice which is not water originally, there are no Buddhas outside ourselves, even though we have been turned into ice.

Master Yoka Genkaku (Yung-chia Hsuan-chueh) writes in his *Shodoka* (Cheng Tao Ko), “The real nature of unenlightenment (ice) is, namely, the Buddha Nature (water); the empty body of delusions

(ice) is nothing other than Dharma (water).”² Master Genkaku is saying that there is no Buddha-nature outside our bodies given to desires and delusions. Indeed, there are no True Selves anywhere except in our empty bodies as such.

Not knowing how close the truth is to them,
Beings seek it afar. What a pity!
It is like crying out for water,
While in the midst of water.

There is the saying, “When I caught a thief, he turned out to be my son.” When we are caught by the dualistic and delusive thoughts of God versus Man, we look up to God in Heaven far away from this world and long for Buddha existing beyond an innumerable number of lands. This is a great mistake. They say Buddha is “near.” Indeed, Buddha exists right here as near as can be. “The ultimate meaning of truth is like our eyebrows. It is near, but we cannot ordinarily find it.” It is just that we are not aware of how close it is. How silly it is to search for Buddha far away and outside ourselves! It is as if we were crying out for water because we are thirsty while we are immersed in swollen waters.

Confucius also says, “The Way is never separable from us. What is separable is not the Way.” The Way does not lie in putting certain rigid moral teachings into practice in the same way as the train running mechanically on a prefixed railroad track. When the “selfless self” operates in no-mind (*mu-shin*) in every move of our hands and feet, the Way appears.

Master Dogen likewise writes in the section titled “*Genjo Koan*” in *Shobo-genzo* that there is no fish that examines water before swimming in it, and there is no bird that inspects the sky before flying across it; if “there were any such fish or bird, it would never find its way either in the water or across the sky.” He continues to say, “This Way or this very place exists because it is neither large nor small, it is neither in the self nor in the other, and neither in the past nor in the present; it exists just as it is.” He further writes, “If a bird departs from the sky, it will die in almost no time; if a fish leaves the water, it will die immediately.”³

Thus, Master Dogen stresses the oneness of birds and sky, and fish and water. This is true of both human beings and the Way. Indeed, “What is separable is not the Way.” I cannot help calling it foolish and vain to seek God and Buddha somewhere far way and apart from us and to regard the Way and Truth as something dual and opposite from us, as if “crying for water out of thirst while we are in the midst of it.” As Buddhas and beings are like water and ice, all we have to do is to dissolve the hard lumps of ego into nothingness.

It is like the rich man's son
Who has lost his way among the poor.
The reason why beings transmigrate through the six worlds
Is because they are lost in the darkness of ignorance,
Wandering from darkness to darkness,
How can they ever be free from birth and death?

We are essentially the same as Buddhas. But when we reflect over our life in reality, we find many of us living from day to day in great difficulties and agony, far from being Buddhas. In the *Myōhō Renge Kyo* (Saddharma-pundarika-sutra),⁴ the unenlightened man is compared to the son of a rich man who lives among beggars without knowing their origin. The rich man here, of course, alludes to Buddha. All of us are the legitimate children of Buddha and naturally possess the right to inherit Buddha Mind. However, for various reasons at some point we become estranged from our parent, Buddha, and have only taken more and more wrong turns in our ignorance on the road of delusion. Therefore, our parent exhausts every means to search for us all over the world. His unceasing search for us corresponds to the so-called Amida Buddha's true wish for universal salvation cherished in the Shinshu sect of Buddhism.

The rich man finally discovers his own son among the crowd of beggars and takes him home. But his son finds it hard to trust his parent, meaning the unenlightened man cannot affirm his own identity with Buddha, or believe in the true Dharma. Therefore, the parent makes them begin with the menial work of servants, gradually promoting them to the positions of clerks, managers, and then heirs at long last, according to their progressive familiarity with the rich

man's life. This parable illustrates the Buddha's (parent's) compassionate love for his children, which leads us step by step from the teachings of Hinayana Buddhism to those of Mahayana Buddhism, which culminate in our self-awareness as children of Buddha.

The *Myoho Renge Kyo* teaches that human beings are perpetually bound to the wheel of transmigration between birth and death in the six worlds of delusions (Hell, the world of hungry ghosts, the world of beasts, the world of strife, the world of human beings), because we are alienated from our original selves. This is due to our own lack of wisdom, or the concealment of wisdom due to our blind attachment to external things. Our transmigration between life and death is caused by our ignorance in which we are incapable of perceiving things as they truly are. Because of our ignorance and thirst for love we suffer from our bondage to the transmigratory rounds of birth and death, unable to escape from this world of darkness. Then, how can we escape this wheel of painful transmigration between birth and death or the alienation of the self from the realities of life? The method of escaping it is presented in the stanza quoted below from Hakuin's poem.

As for zazen taught in the Mahayana,
It exceeds all praise.
The six *paramitas* beginning with giving,
Observing the precepts,
And other good deeds, variously enumerated as
Nembutsu, repentance, and so on,
Are all finally reducible to zazen.

Any religion, if it is to be called religion, has something corresponding to meditation or samadhi power. The rope-dancing feat in a circus can hardly be done except by one who is in samadhi. However, such samadhi belongs to the realm of Hinayana Buddhism. It is only the samadhi practiced in Mahayana Buddhism that is capable of awakening us to our temporarily concealed original Buddha-nature by liberating us from our bondage to the wheel of transmigration in the six worlds. The word "Mahayana" is called *Daijo*

in Japanese. It can be thought of as a great vehicle referring to Dharma, which carries many people from this shore of delusion to the other shore of enlightenment.

The simple word “zen” varies immensely in meaning and dimension. It is possible that it consists of eighty-four thousand doctrines. What I call *zenjyo* (the power of concentration attained in samadhi) here is the largest in form, the richest in content, and the most excellent in quality. That is to say, it is the same as Mahayana Zen Buddhism, which is the largest, the most varied, and the most superb of all the Buddhist sects.

In regard to discipline in Mahayana Zen Buddhism, it is said that if we sit for one minute we are Buddhas for one minute, and that even in one minute of zazen the whole truth in its completeness is embraced. Indeed, it “exceeds all praise.” Concretely speaking, the six ways of reaching the other shore of enlightenment from this shore of delusion are all contained in one duration of sitting. Such is the significance of zazen. Paramita means “reaching the other shore” or “salvation.” It consists of charity, the observation of precepts, perseverance, diligence, concentration, and wisdom. The first two are mentioned by Hakuin in his poem.

“Charity” means sharing what we have with others in renunciation of our greed. It is commonly deemed to consist of giving the three things: possessions, Dharma, and freedom from fear. While charity is commonly interpreted to mean the giving of money and material things to those who are in need of them, in the true sense of the word, both the giving and the receiving must be equally in the same state of nothingness and non-attachment, free from their greed and ego. Sharing Dharma with others means to share our formless property such as reason and knowledge. Having freedom from fear in common with others alludes to leading others to the realm of no fear, as found in *Hannya Shin Gyo* (Prajnaparamitahridaya-sutra). This way of leading others to the realm of absolute security is the ultimate meaning of charity.

When a certain man asked Yamaoka Tesshu about the ultimate meaning of swordsmanship, Tesshu is said to have answered, “I

have left it to the care of Kannon⁵ in Asakusa.” After searching all over for it, the man finally came upon a framed calligraphy of Tesshu’s in which the characters for “Give Fearlessness” were written. The sight of this work, they say, spontaneously awakened him to the ultimate meaning of swordsmanship. Samadhi is the very realm of absolute selfless self, free from fear and insecurity. I may well say that the best and the only way to embody the feeling of fearlessness is to be in samadhi.

The precepts are the rules to be observed in the maintenance of correct living. Actually, they pertain to not blinding oneself further to one’s original Buddha-nature and not lapsing into the duality between self and other. For instance, in Hinayana Buddhism, we are considered to be strictly observing the Buddhist precepts as long as we keep from stealing, even if we covet other people’s property in our minds. But, in Mahayana Buddhism the mere thought of stealing in itself is deemed to be a breach of the precepts even if we do not actually steal.

However, in Bodhidharma’s One Mind Precept, we are thought to be in perfect keeping with the precepts as long as we are free from the duality of stealing and not stealing, knowing well that self and other are one, and being compassionate for all others with which we are one. It is for this reason that in the samadhi practiced in Mahayana Buddhism, in which we do not distinguish between self and other wherever we may be, all the precepts are of themselves perfectly observed.

Moreover, there are no virtues that do not go with the samadhi of Mahayana Buddhism—perseverance in which anger is controlled in favor of modesty, diligence in which laziness is turned into wholehearted concentration on the thing of our concern, meditation in which our disturbed minds are unified and undisturbed under any condition, and wisdom in which we are able to see myriads of things as they truly are without yielding to folly and ignorance. All these virtues accompany the samadhi of Mahayana Buddhism.

Nembutsu is the invocation of Buddha’s name. It is said, “When I invoke the name of Buddha, there is neither I nor Buddha.” This is

the true nembutsu. It pertains to the realm of oneness, rather than to that of dualism in which self and Buddha are deemed to be separate as subject and object of invocation respectively. Thus, it is not too much to say that the samadhi of Mahayana Zen Buddhism is the most supreme form of nembutsu.

In the next line of the poem, which pertains to repentance and discipline, discipline is regarded as the practice of the paramita. All of these good deeds go back to discipline and everything unites into one in samadhi. It is because samadhi as such is the way of realizing the Absolute, and it is the very origin of all things as one. Master Dogen emphasized this point by going so far as to write in the *Bendowa* volume of his *Shobo-genzo*, “Dharma, thus transmitted from person to person correctly and directly, is most supreme of all the supreme practices. Just sit and get liberated from mind and body without resorting to any such things as incense-burning, religious services, the invocation of the Buddha’s name, repentance, and sutra-recitation, not to mention the acquisition of knowledge.” It must be said that what “exceeds all praise” truly is “the samadhi of the Mahayana.”

The merit of even a single sitting in zazen
Extinguishes the countless sins accumulated in the past.
Where then are there evil paths to misguide us?
The Pure Land cannot be far away.

Those who, even once, in all reverence,
Listen to this truth,
Praise it, and faithfully follow it,
Will be endowed with innumerable merits.

As the samadhi of Mahayana Buddhism is the way of realizing the Absolute and of fully appreciating the oneness of all Dharmas, it makes it possible for us to transcend the dualities of self and other as well as of good and evil in sitting for the duration of one incense-stick, however short it may be. It is fair to say that we will be freed from perpetual suffering from beginningless and endless sins we commit against one another in a single sitting of meditation. When our original selves— free from purity and impurity—are realized, the

evil world of dualism cannot exist. That is why this very world, filled with hardships and sufferings, becomes the Pure Land of tranquility and light as it truly is, where there is no longer any evil to discard and any good to acquire.

The samadhi of Mahayana Buddhism is thus abundant with blessings. It is true that those who immediately believe and accept this essence of the Zen teaching with admiration and joy will be undoubtedly granted infinite bliss.

And yet, while it seems easy to praise the Teachings and faithfully follow them, it is actually very hard. In my book *Ken to Zen*, published some years ago, I refer to *Ken Dan* written by Lord Matsuura Seizan.⁶ In this book the author discusses the truth of swordsmanship in terms of the following quotation: “If my father summons me, I just stand up with an immediate response, ‘Yes!’ instead of thinking of a reply.” I also mention in the same book that Master Imakita Kosen likewise writes in the fourth chapter of *Zenkai Ichiran* that the consistent way of a superior man lies nowhere but in saying, “Yes!”⁷ Master Takuan calls this mind that answers, “Yes!” Immovable Wisdom. I think that this spontaneous response to anything in the affirmative selflessly and with mu-shin (no mind) is “praising the practice of zazen and faithfully following it.”

It is said that zazen does not mean the self sits in meditation, but that self has been made to sit by zazen. When doing zazen if you jump into the state of zazen and lose yourself in it as prescribed by the instructions, all at once you will experience Great Zen Samadhi. Master Dogen is said to have remarked in his return from China after finishing his training there, “I have gained a flexible mind.” I think these words of his should be deeply appreciated. It can be said that only when our mind is free as water, liberated from our rigid ego, are we capable of “praising the practice of zazen and faithfully following it.”

I have written before about the man of great filial piety in Kosho paying a visit to the man of great filial piety in Shinshu. This story should offer another example of the flexibility of the responsive mind.

But if you turn your eyes within yourselves,

And at once testify to the truth of Self-nature—
The Self-nature that is no-nature,
You will have gone beyond dualism.

After listening to the discussion on the benefits of zazen, we may have admiration and praise for it, but still more beneficial is the actual practice of zazen. In our search for things outside ourselves, our minds are turned toward the external world, but in zazen our minds take an inward turn of 180 degrees to “prove our original nature” by illuminating ourselves. Then our merit increases tremendously. Principles of things and the True Self are after all nothing but knowledge when we comprehend them intellectually, however well we may do so. Just like the rice cakes painted in a picture, intellectually conceived principles are not capable of satisfying our hunger. They are of no avail unless they are realized and substantiated in self-discipline on a personal basis.

We should note the words “at once” used by Master Hakuin in the stanza above on zazen. “At once” means “in this very place here and now.” It suggests that the world of enlightenment exists nowhere but in our everyday life in which we are afflicted with many hardships and agonies as we keep on rolling and falling, and that this very reality under our feet is, as it really is, the dynamic field on which our own self-nature operates as when we are in samadhi.

Our self-nature realized in enlightenment is neither splendid nor blessed. It is no-nature. That is to say, it is empty. Ayusmat Nagarjuna⁸ writes in his *Madhyamikasastra* to the effect that “things which come into being through the operation of Buddha Mind have no self-nature. Things without their own self-natures are empty. They are empty because of their no-self-nature.”

I am sorry if I seem to be imposing my personal opinions on you, but that is not my intent. What on earth is self-nature then? Self-nature is said to be a perpetually constant and unique controller, which is expressed by the following Japanese phrase, “*joitsu shusai*.” “*Jo*” of “*joitsu*” means “eternal constancy;” “*itsu*” means “only one and not two;” “*shusai*” is “to control and decide.” Thus, “*joitsu shusai*” should mean the “eternal, unchangeable, and unique ruler.”

What the term “no self-nature” suggests is that the true mind is free from any fixed idea of such an entity as self-nature. In other words, self-nature may not be found anywhere except in the perpetually changing and moving forms of things in which it is concretely embodied.

We are commonly apt to confine ourselves within the scope of our five-foot bodies and fifty-year life spans. But, in fact, our five-foot bodies and fifty-year life spans are supported by an innumerable number of lives. In a very commonsense way of speaking, my parents gave birth to me, and their parents in turn gave birth to them. If I trace back my life to its very origin in this way, I have two parents, four grandparents, eight great-grandparents, and so on. If we assume that one human generation lasts twenty-five years, I may be viewed as the one hundred and twenty-first generation springing from a man and woman of three thousand years ago. If the number of my ancestors included in 121 generations is calculated, it amounts to the tremendously large number of 26,549 followed by 32 zeros.

It would seem impossible, even for a computer, to compute the overwhelmingly great number of the ancestors of all the human beings in this world dating back to their very origin. Supported by so many lives of human beings of the past, for the first time I exist here and now in “my five-foot body and fifty-year life span.” For this reason, I can safely say that the whole of the human race is embraced in this single life of me. What is true is that there is no “I” which is a purely independent ego that has a fixed self-nature. It is because of our attachment to our fixed self-recognition that “the other” antagonistically comes into being. And from our mutual opposition and antagonism stem various conflicts in the wretched life of ordinary men of the world.

However, if, in our quiet self-reflection, we turn our mind’s eye from the external world to the internal life to realize our true self-nature we will clearly understand that the true nature of our Self, which we thought up until now had a fixed, real existence, is in fact no self-nature. Because we have no self-nature, there is neither self nor other. In the absence of self and other, there cannot be such passions as joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure, all of which arise from

the dualities of self and other. All things, just as they are in their very essence of no self-nature, function without any hindrance in freely flowing transformation.

This is the true condition of life and the reality beyond dualism. But dualism as such, even if it is originally the same as theorization, suggests nothing but the division of the whole. Therefore, it is natural that dualism is connected with analysis and abstraction that result in the death of living things. I think that what Master Hakuin means by his words “beyond dualism” is that it is not only we, who transcend such playful dualism, but also all other things in their own no self-nature that are in operation according to their selfless essence.

The gate of the oneness of cause and effect is opened. The Way is straight,
Being neither two nor three.

In the form of no-form, we go and return

Nowhere but here.

In the thought of no-thought, we sing and dance

To the voice of Dharma.

The sky of boundless samadhi is vast!

The illuminating full moon of the Fourfold Wisdom will shine.

What then should we see?

Now that Nirvana is realized here and now,

This place is none other than the land of Lotus Flowers.

This body is none other than a Buddha.

In connection with discipline and proof of enlightenment, people in general believe mistakenly that discipline (cause) precedes enlightenment (effect). However, upon sincere contemplation we come to realize that the effect called enlightenment, even if it infinitely varies in degree, is inconceivable apart from the cause called discipline. I cannot help but say that the accumulation of causes as such is the effect. To speak more precisely, this is so because our very wish for spiritual discipline contains the essence of our original Buddhahood. Looking at it essentially, cause is none other than effect.

It must be in the samadhi of Mahayana Buddhism that the oneness of cause and effect, as well as the oneness of discipline and proof, is unmistakably realized. This is because when we are in

samadhi, we transcend the distinction between the cause called discipline coming before in time and the effect called enlightenment coming after. Cause and effect are thus brought into one, as in the saying that if we sit for one moment we are Buddhas for one moment, and if we sit for one minute we are Buddhas for one minute.

Thus, the realization of our own true self-nature does not mean the acquisition of hitherto unknown knowledge of ourselves, but the renunciation of the hardened mass of delusion called our egos which we have borne so tenaciously up until now until we could hardly stand its weight. If satori is the experience we have the moment we renounce our egos and become one with the universe, that moment, needless to say, is when cause and effect are brought into one.

This state of being is termed the dropping of body and mind. As long as we are well integrated and liberated from body and mind in our everyday actions, each of our actions, however trivial it may be, will fully reveal the original nature of ourselves. “The clear wind arising in every step of our feet” directly alludes to the Absolute. Hence, it must be said that the Way is straight, being neither two nor three.” Body and mind, liberated from tenacious delusions, still retains the same body limited to “five feet” in height. However, this body reveals the Buddha-nature, being the concrete embodiment of the Absolute. It has the form without form. In other words, it is “in the form of no-form.” It is exactly what Master Dogen means by the following poem:

The colors of the mountain,
The echoes of the valleys,
As naturally as all other things,
All embody the voice and the form
Of our Shakyamuni.

In enlightenment, every move of our hands and feet is the act of the Absolute. Even when we leap and jump, slip and fall, we always find ourselves in the middle of the Great Way, just as Master Hakuin says, “Your going and returning takes place nowhere but where you are. We go and return nowhere else but here.” We are always

sleeping or waking in the embrace of Buddha, whenever and wherever we may be.

When we are freed from our inflexible delusions, our True Selves are revealed in formless forms. Likewise, when we renounce all our delusions, our original true thoughts in turn begin to operate. Our true thoughts here mean no-thoughts. “Your thought being the thought of no-thought,” when you act “your singing and dancing is none other than the voice of Dharma.” Anything we do never fails to embody the truth in strict conformity to the ancient saying, “Whether we go to the left or to the right, we always return to our origin. Every clapping of our hands conforms to propriety.” Hence, the following poem:

Where did I sleep last night?
Tonight it will be here.
And in the rice fields tomorrow night,
A pillow of grass.⁹

This absolute freedom of action in all places, like the passing clouds and the flowing stream, is referred to by Hakuin in the following line of his poem: “The sky of boundless samadhi is vast.”

Samadhi, in short, pertains to complete integration with objects, for the subject and object will be no longer in opposition. Master Rinzai also deals with this problem in his famous Fourfold Perception of the Truth, which I would like to discuss some other time. Our perception of the truth of being varies with time and occasion. For instance, we take in all things subjectively with ourself as the subject at one time, and at another time we integrate ourselves into the objective view of reality. It is not uniform. Thus, we can enjoy our free and non-attached perception in any manner if only we are liberated from subject and object in opposition to each other. Just as airplanes fly freely across the spacious sky, we can act uninhibitedly, for “The sky of boundless samadhi is vast!” If we are in this state of absolute freedom, the illuminating full moon of the Fourfold Wisdom will shine clearly there.

The Fourfold Wisdom consists of the Wisdom of a Big Round Mirror, the Wisdom of Equality, the Wisdom of True Perceiving, and

the Wisdom of True Working. These may be thought of as the four aspects of the workings of wisdom.

The first, Wisdom of a Big Round Mirror, pertains to the primal wisdom which is bright and clear all over like a big round mirror. It may be deemed as the essence of the mind, in which Heaven and Earth are one with us as in the phrase “the light of the great, round mirror brimming with black.” It alludes to the oneness of myriads of things.

The second, Wisdom of Equality, is the wisdom in which it can be seen that all things in existence possess a nature that is equal. This kind of wisdom alludes to the mountains, rivers, grasses, trees, and all things as equally embodying the wisdom and virtues of *Tathagata*.

The third, Wisdom of True Perceiving, is said to be the wisdom which makes one observe the delicate operations of all beings by means of the analysis of their ways of existence, their structures, their forms, their actions, and so forth.

The fourth is the Wisdom of True Working. It is the wisdom capable of making our sense perception function properly, as in the case of the eyes seeing and the nose smelling. The operation of this kind of wisdom for universal salvation points to the integration of enlightenment and action, namely, the oneness of knowledge and conduct.

This Fourfold Wisdom corresponds to the eight consciousnesses with which we are originally one. The samadhi of Mahayana Buddhism is considered to be the only way of turning the eight consciousnesses into the Fourfold Wisdom and presenting it to us fully and clearly. The Fourfold Wisdom is not to be added to us from outside by the power nurtured in samadhi, but the power of samadhi itself is something to be cherished because it is capable of letting the Fourfold Wisdom operate fully and brightly like the full moon which shines clearly in the sky.

Well, having come to this pass, what else is there to seek? There should be nothing sought. The reason is that “nirvana is manifested” before one’s eyes as the ultimate. Originally the term “nirvana” was used in the sense of blowing out or extinguishing fire, that is to say, blowing out the flames of our desire, agonies, and delusions to

secure great peace. Nirvana is not pessimistic or negative like going to one's death the way most people think of it. Rather, it means gaining eternal life and entering the state of absolute security.

The attainment of this state of absolute security alludes to the land of Lotus Blossoms. The Land of Amitabha is called the Pure Land of Infinite Light, while the Pure Land of Shakyamuni is called the World of the Treasure House of Lotus Blossoms, or the Land of Lotus Blossoms. However, this Land of Lotus Blossoms does not exist outside us. It exists in the very place where each of us enters the state of absolute security by being awakened to our eternal life in nirvana, which is another name for samadhi. Therefore, there is no room for any doubt in our belief that this "very body is a Buddha," for we indeed live, breathing in the Land of Lotus Blossoms, which is said to exist right here under our very feet. Hence, "All beings are primarily Buddhas." Searching for Buddhas as they primarily are, we have at last come to realize that the original Buddha-nature is concretely embodied nowhere but in these very bodies of ours that live from day to day, waving our arms and walking with our feet.



Hotei (Chn. Pu-tai) was originally an eccentric Chinese monk of the 10th century known for his compassion. Eventually he became revered as an incarnation of the future Buddha Miroku (Skt. Maitreya). The last of the Ten Oxherding Pictures (see Chapter 7) shows Hotei entering the marketplace, representing the goal of transcending life and death (dualism). Statue on the grounds of Daihonzan Chozen-ji.



Notes

- ¹ Ninomiya Sontoku. 1787–1856. Farm technologist and the leading agricultural philosopher of the late Edo period (1600–1868). The following reference is from his work, *Yawa* (Night Tales) (Publisher and date unknown).
- ² Yung-chia Hsuan-chueh (Jpn. Yoka Genkaku). Early Chinese Zen Master (665–713). The phrase quoted is from *Cheng Tao Ko* (Jpn. Shodoka) (A Song of Enlightenment).
- ³ Dogen, *Shobo-genzo*, *Genjo Koan* volume.
- ⁴ *Saddharmapundarika-sutra*. (Skt.) (Chin. Maio-fa-lien-hua-ching). (Jpn. Myoho Renge Kyo). The Lotus Sutra.
- ⁵ Avolokitesvara. (Skt.) (Jpn. Kannon). One of the most significant bodhisattvas of Mahayana Buddhism, the embodiment of compassion.
- ⁶ Matsuura Seizan. Early 19th century. Lord of Hizen Hirado, now Hirado-city, Nagasaki Prefecture, Japan. Famous as the Master swordsman of “Shin Kei To Ryu” school of swordsmanship. The following reference comes from his book, *Ken Dan* (Talks on Swordsmanship) (19th Century).
- ⁷ Imakita Kosen, *Zenkai Ichiran* (One Large Wave in the Sea of Zen) (1876).
- ⁸ Ayusmat Nagarjuna. 2nd and 3rd century. (Jpn. Ryuju Sonja). One of the most important philosophers of Buddhism and the founder of Madhyamika School. The following reference comes from his work, *Madhyamikasastra* (Jpn. Churon) (Treatise of the Middle Way) (Publisher and date unknown).
- ⁹ Source unknown.