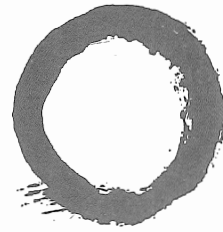


## DHARMA EYE



## 法眼

NEWS OF SOTO ZEN BUDDHISM TEACHINGS AND PRACTICE IN NORTH AMERICA

## MY BEST FRIENDS HAVE HELPED ME TO REACH MY DESTINY

by Gengo Akiba

Rev. Gengo Akiba,  
General Director

I ended the last Dharma story by telling how Ungan and Dogo left Hyakujo-Zenji and went to Yakusan-Zenji to become his disciples and to deepen their zen practice. This time, I would like to continue to introduce their episodes.

Ungan and Dogo had practiced very hard and helped each other under Yakusan-Zenji. According to the Sodo-shu, collection of the Ancestral Hall, the following incident took place.

One day, Ungan asked "Where are you going?"

Ungan replied, "I'm planning to visit my senior Dharma brother, Isan-Osho, at Hyakujo-Zenji's temple."

"Why are you going to visit him?" Yakusan-Zenji asked.

Ungan replied, "When Isan-Osho and I were still under Hyakujo-Zenji, I made a promise to Isan-Osho."

"What kind of promise was it?"

Ungan replied, "Isan-Osho was Tenzo and I was Isan-Osho's secretary. While we were there, working together, we promised to each other that we'd stay there together until we died. As the time went by, I left Hyakujo-Zenji to come to you, thereby breaking my promise. Now we are apart. I want to see him and explain why I left there."

Then, Yakusan-Zenji immediately gave him permission to leave.

Ungan left right away. His younger Dharma brother, Dogo, saw him off, carrying his bags until they reached the nearby bridge. Dogo went back to his master and asked him, "Was it

OK that Ungan left the temple like this?" Then the master said, "You have been close to him. You have spent a lot of time together. You should have asked him yourself if you wanted to know. Don't ask me." But Dogo pleaded for words from the master. The master said, "If you insist, I'll tell you this: Ungan has the vision to see the way clearly but he still needs to continue to refine himself (Tota)."

After Dogo heard the master's words, he went after Ungan. He found him at the ryokan (hotel) and told him what Yakusan-Zenji had said. After hearing his master's words, Ungan returned to Yakusan-Zenji's temple, never to leave.

This paragraph tells the story of a pivotal point for Ungan to attain the Way. It was later written that Ungan is considered to be the origin of classic Soto. It is said that he was a Zen person from birth and wearing a Koromo (Monk's robe) inside his mother's womb. I think this illustrates his divine status in later generations. Although he was at Hyakujo-Zenji for 20 years, he was persuaded by Dogo to go to Yakusan-Zenji where he stayed until the very end. Even then, he did not reach his enlightenment. This incident, his work at Yakusan's temple with Dogo, and many other people all helped him to become Yakusan-Zenji's Dharma successor.

If it had not been for Dogo's compassion for his friend, Ungan would have never found out the expectations of the master. Dogo fulfilled the master's expectations and transmitted Tota by helping his senior Dharma brother, Ungan.

Even though Ungan did not go back to explain himself to Isan-Osho, Isan approved Ungan as Yakusan-Zenji's successor by sending Tozan to Ungan (and Tozan eventually became Ungan's successor in Soto Zen). So, as you can see, Isan worked with everybody to help to spread the Dharma.

These people are the foundation of the essence of the Soto Zen. Dogo and Ungan. Ungan and Isan. They worked as a family unit giving support, love, and encouragement to each other. A thousand years ago it was written in the Sodo-shu, "My best friends have helped me to reach my destiny."

Today American Zen is in the bright beginning stage similar to the time of Sekito Kisen through Tozan Ryokai as described in Sodo-shu.

Right now, many powerful, rich and fresh streams of Zen are flowing toward the future. Sometime in the future these various original streams will become one big river of Soto-zen like the Mississippi River and will flow through the ground in America.

This year, June 1st through 3rd, Sokan-bu, Education Center hosted the North American Soto Zen Conference for three days at San Francisco Zen Center. There were about 30 American and Japanese priests in attendance. It was the first conference of this kind and it was successful.

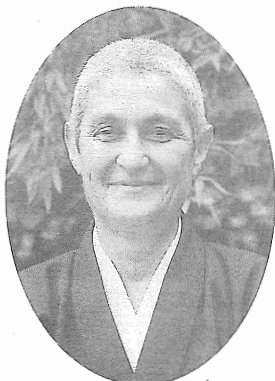
We discussed how we can build canals between the original streams to form a big river and build up the banks of the river to guide the flow toward the future without break. We should continue to talk again and again very carefully to build up the big river of Soto Zen.

To accomplish our task, we need to become like Ungan and Dogo, helping and working together. "My parents gave me birth and my best friend helped to complete me." This was the conviction of the people in the lineage from Sekito through Ungan and Dogo to Tozan. This became the characteristic of their Zen.

We, the practitioners in the stream of Soto Zen, should always remember that we should help each other and work together for the Dharma. I would like to continue this episode in the next issue.

## North American Conference Hosted by San Francisco Zen Center

By Zenkei Hartman



Zenkei Hartman, Abbess of San Francisco Zen Center

San Francisco Zen Center hosted the annual North American Soto Zen Conference on June 1-3, 1998. More than 31 members including five Dendokyoshi and 14 Kaikyoshi attended this year's conference, a number slightly more than last year's meeting in Los Angeles.

The conference began with a service and opening ceremony, followed by opening speeches by Bunryu Dogai Roshi and Gengo

Akiba Roshi. Conference Chairperson Koshi Kuwahara explained that the purpose of the gathering was not to make decisions, but to share ideas with each other, specifically to let

Bunryu Dogai Roshi hear the concerns and ideas of those present at the conference.

During the three days of meetings, participants discussed many topics related to the practice of Soto Zen in America and Japan. As a result of the honest exchange of ideas, participants left the meeting with a better understanding of each other and a stronger commitment to the Dogen Zenji way.

Perhaps the most important work at this conference was the joining and deepening friendship of the various participants. I took particular pleasure in meeting Reverend Bunryu Dogai, Director in Chief, Department of Mission at Headquarters of Soto School in Japan.

Rev. Dogai is an old friend of Reverend Hoitsu Suzuki, the son of Shuryu Suzuki Roshi, our founder. It was gratifying to hear him tell stories of their past together. It became very clear in speaking with Rev. Dogai that he has genuine interest in working with the American sangha and encouraging and supporting the practice of Dogen Zenji's way in America. In general, it was a good opportunity for participants to become better acquainted with the Japanese monks.

This same spirit of forging closer ties with each other was evident when I visited Japan earlier this year. I was so moved by the help and generosity of the monks at Eihei-ji and Sojiji where I did "Zuisei." I was deeply touched by the hospitality of all the temples I visited, particularly that of Rinso-in, where 15 other practitioners and I did an "ango" with Hoitsu Suzuki Roshi and his wife.

Participants to this year's conference were also brought closer together by the stories told about World War II, which arose from a discussion of war and the Buddhist position on war. Rev. Dogai said that the Sotoshu had no official position on this topic. However, he related the various peace-related activities that he as representative of Shumicho and other members of the Sotoshu were engaged in, such as nuclear testing protest letters to the embassies of China, India and Pakistan. The content of the letters was that the Buddhist view as expressed by Dogen and Keizan is that we cannot live apart from nature or the environment.

He also referred the group to an apology in the Zen Quarterly written by the Sotoshu for its involvement during World War II. The Sotoshu also sponsored a memorial service for those injured or killed by the atomic bombs dropped on Japan by the United States. In conclusion, Rev. Dogai expressed the wish to prevent war and vow for peace.

Others at the conference related their experiences as members of the U.S. Army and the participation of the 442nd Battalion of Japanese-American soldiers. In each case, a common theme seemed to be striving to live day-to-day and to find the Buddha's way in the midst of world turmoil.

In his closing remarks, Rev. Dogai began by saying how helpful the meeting was for him and that he hoped to attend the next meeting. He ended his remarks by saying, "I tried to answer as much as possible...but in the end you go to the river to wash your ears. I hope I've fulfilled my role, but if my answers were not fulfilling, please wash your ears in the bay."

Akiba Sokan asked the group to put away their differences and think about how each can be harmonious and useful by being above and thinking of the bigger picture. "Put yourself outside...do what's best. If we do that, perhaps we can have better ideas and solution," he said.

Shohaku Okumura briefly thanked everyone and said that the group had taken one step toward understanding each other and that they would need to continue and go a long way with each other.

This year's conference afforded us a chance to share and give opinions to the Shumucho, Headquarters of Soto School in Japan, on the state of the Soto School in North America and to talk with each other about common concerns. But most importantly, we were able to communicate our respect for each other. That is the true flower that we have planted and will nurture as time goes by. I hope that we will be able to continue our dialogue with each other in the future and continue to find common ground to stand upon. I look forward to continuing this effort.

Finally, I would like to commend the efforts of Shumucho in helping to spread the Dharma overseas, and in particular, the participation of Bunryu Dogai Roshi and Koshi Kuwahara. I would also like to express my deep appreciation for the work of the Sokan, Gengo Akiba, and the members of the Education Center, Shohaku Okumura, Taiken Yokoyama and Risai Furutani, who stand out as exemplars of this spirit of generosity.

*Zenkei Hartman became Abbess of San Francisco Zen Center in 1996 and serves together with Co-Abbot Zoketsu Fischer. She began her practice of Soto Zen in 1969 and was ordained priest in 1977 with Myoyu Richard Baker Roshi. She received Dharma Transmission with Sojun Mel Weitsman Roshi in 1988.*

## Meeting Summary of North American Soto Zen Conference '98

From Minutes taken by Kokai Roberts,  
Conference Secretary

**Attendees:** Held on June 1-3, 1998 at San Francisco Zen Center, attendees to the North American Soto Zen Conference were as follows: Akiba Gengo, Tenshin Anderson, Chozen Bays, Daien Bennage, Chiko Corona, Bunryu Dogai, Zoketsu Fischer, Issho Fujita, Tenshin Fletcher, Risai Furutani, Zenkei Hartman, Keido Kaye, Shumyo Kojima, Ryosho Kokuzo, Shuichi Kurai, Koshi Kuwahara, Eko Little, Kensho Miyamae, Teijo Munnich, Ikki Nambara, Tonen O' Connor, Shohaku Okumura, Zuiko Redding, Sekijun Sunna, Kisan Ueno, Jisho Warner, Sojun Weitsman, Taiken Yokoyama, Shunten Yoshinami and Kokai Roberts.

**Agenda 1-1: Function of the Kaikyo Center and the Sokanbu** - Sotoshu established the Kaikyo Center in 1997 to renew and enhance Soto Zen in North America. Rev. Dogai

expressed hope that the Kaikyo Center will facilitate communication between the American Soto Zen community and the Japanese Soto School. Okumura Shohaku is Director of the Kaikyo Center with Akiba Gengo as the Sokan of the North American Soto Zen Administrative Office.

The Kaikyo Center's functions include teaching Soto Zen, translating texts (Soto Zen Text Project), hosting workshops, supporting activities of the Japanese-American Soto Temples and each Zen Center, helping in the unification of the ASZB and the SZBA, fostering education of the public, and serving as a source of communication with the Sotoshu in Japan. The administrative office (Sokanbu) will work to develop a system to train and register American priests who want to have recognition by the Shumucho through the Sotoshu bylaws.

The following documents related to the discussion were distributed at the conference: *Regulations of Sotoshu Overseas Propagation, Sotoshu North American Kaikyo Sokanbu Bylaws, North American Soto Zen Kaikyo Center Regulations* (working draft translation) by Shohaku Okumura, and *A Prospectus for Formation of an American Sotoshu* (working title) by Shohaku Okumura.

**Agenda 1-2: Shumucho's concerns about missionary activity in the U.S.** - In the course of discussion about Zen Training, some voiced opinions that better communication and more translations from the Kaikyo Center would be helpful. Okumura said that he hoped his vision as presented in *A Prospectus for Formation of an American Sotoshu* would be a good starting point.

Akiba Sokan explained his difficult situation, being positioned between the Shumucho and the American Zen groups. He is at the same time an advocate for American Zen and a representative of the Shumucho. He indicated that although he must work within the Soto school bylaws, he would like to create a harmonious working relationship between the Shumucho and North American Zen.

**Agenda 2-1: Soto Zen Associations in the U.S.** - There was agreement to leave the two Soto Zen Associations (ASZB established by the Kaikyoshi and SZBA organized by Dendokyoshi) separate for now. It is not the intention of the Kaikyo Center to impose anything on American Zen, said Rev. Dogai. Rather they want to help and support the Dharma here, and he hoped there would eventually be an American Sokan and Director.

**Agenda 2-2: Possibility of establishing a legal entity for the Administrative Office (Sokanbu) and the Education Center (Kaikyo Center)** - Discussion focused on the need for the Kaikyo Center to be incorporated in order have tax-exempt status.

**Agenda 3-1: Replacement of Furutani-sensei** - Shohaku Okumura said that an English speaking member of the staff is vital in order for the Kaikyo Center to best serve Soto Zen in America.

**Agenda 3-2; Moving the Kaikyo Center from Los Angeles to the San Francisco Bay Area** - Arguments in favor of moving the center to the Bay Area include the fact that four Dendokyoshis live in the Bay Area, the SZBA is based there

and it is easier for others to travel to San Francisco. The main reason against moving from Los Angeles is that Zenshuji is the "Betsuin," or branch temple, of Eiheiiji and Sojiji in the U.S.

**Agenda 4: Is the Dendoshi category necessary?** - After Dharma Transmission, a priest can apply to be Dendokyoshi. However, the priest must first participate in a Tokubetsu Sesshin. There has not been a Tokubetsu Sesshin recently because of the insufficient number of applications, except in the European community. The category of Dendoshi was originally developed for French Zen temples who needed a legal designation in order to have tax-exempt status.

**Agenda 5: Should the translation of the word "Dendo" in Dendokyoshi be changed?** - Dendo means "Zen Transmits the Way" or "Transmission of the Way," and is usually translated as "missionary." The main objection to the current translation is that the group does not see its members as missionaries. One suggestion for alternate translation was "Priest Transmitting the Way." No decision was made and the issue was tabled.

**Agenda 6-1: American Monks' Training: How to create a system whereby the Shumucho would be able to recognize the training that American monks receive in the U.S.** - Dogai Roshi commented that Akiba Sokan and the ministers from Japan working in the U.S. have a vision (but no funding) of building a Sodo in the U.S. for training monks. The Sodo would allow Japanese and American monks to practice together. The facility would not replace Tassajara, Zen Mountain Center or other training centers already existing in North America.

In response to concerns that such a center might homogenize the practice already developed in the U.S. or that it would signal that the Sotoshu did not think American training was good enough, Dogai Roshi replied that no one in Japan thought that American training was insufficient. He pointed out that there is also a diversity of practice styles in Japan that vary from temple to temple. But again, he returned to what seemed to be the bottom line---that if a person wants recognition from the Sotoshu, they must follow the bylaws of the Sotoshu. That is the only way to be verified by the Soto

Zen in Japan although it does not mean that the Sotoshu will not support American Zen. He explained that the bylaws do not contain the content of practice or dictate temple Shingi. A request was made that the Sotoshu bylaws be translated into English, including a translation of all the various categories of priest ordination.

The AZTA and the SZBA wish to develop standards for priest training and ordination. Criteria developed in the U.S. for priests will have to correspond to Shumucho standards for a person to do Zusei in Japan.

It was discussed that priest registration in the U.S. will be through the Sokanbu and not through individual temples, as it is in Japan. Currently, American priests are registered through the founders temple in Japan. A suggestion was made to register American priests through the SZBA. One goal is to have the training of American priests recognized by the Shumucho, enabling them to train in Japan.

**Agenda 6-2: Doing Zusei in Japan** - Rev. Dogai informed the group of the meaning of Zusei. According to the Sotoshu bylaws, there are three steps to a Soto priest's ordination: Shuke Tokodo, Shuso and Zusei, which consists of going to both honzons to pay respects. In Japan, a teacher is obligated to support their disciple (fully ordained priest) as a lifelong commitment. Therefore, this is not done lightly. In the past, you might have many disciples but only a few would be Shuso. Once a priest receives Dharma Transmission from their master, they go to Eiheiiji and Sojiji and are the resident priest (Abbot) at each temple for one night. They then pay respects to the founders in the morning.

Qualifications for doing Zusei in Japan for disciples of Kaikyoshi and Dendokyoshi were clarified through the process set up to handle Zenkei Hartman's recent Zusei. Written application can be made through the Sokanbu to the Shumucho.

Regarding a concern about the expense of going to Japan for Zusei, there was discussion of doing Zusei in the U.S. as an alternative. In reality, it is very expensive for priests in Japan to do Zusei as well and they save for many years to pay for the cost of the ceremony. It was suggested that members help each other in financing activities such as Zusei.

**Kaikyo Center news not covered by Agenda items** - The Kaikyo Center is planning for the next North American Soto Zen Conference in May or June of 1999. Participants may send suggestions for the next agenda to the Kaikyo Center. Subcommittees will be formed to organize the conference.

On the topic of Japanese-American temples, the Kaikyo Center stated that it hopes to be able to serve both English and Japanese-speaking temples in response to a concern over falling attendance. These temples need English-speaking leaders to appeal to the younger generation.



Leaders of American Soto Zen and representatives from Sotoshu in Japan gather for North American Zen Conference in San Francisco

## Conference on Buddhist Women Reveals Diversity and Challenges

By Sensei Wendy Egyoku Nakao



Sensei Wendy Egyoku Nakao  
Head Teacher of L.A. Zen Center

The North American Conference on Buddhist Women was held during the cool summer days of June 3-7, 1998 at Pitzer College in Claremont, California with the theme of "Unity and Diversity." The conference was sponsored by Sakyadhita, an international association of Buddhist women, and the Religious Studies Department of The Claremont Colleges.

Approximately 100 women from Asia, Europe, Canada, and the United States attended the conference. They brought with them many Buddhist traditions: Tibetan, Theravada, Japanese Pure Land, and Zen. The Zen schools were represented by Asian woman practitioners from Korea and Taiwan and by American Soto Zen practitioners mainly from San Francisco Zen Center, Berkeley Zen Center, Zenshuji, and Zen Center of Los Angeles. Several men from the Bay area Buddhist Peace Fellowship also attended as allies to the women's practice.

Sakyadhita, "Daughters of the Buddha," is an international organization founded in 1987 at the first International Conference on Buddhist Nuns held in Bodhi Gaya, India. Since then, Sakyadhita has sponsored a conference every two years in Asia to address the needs and concerns of Buddhist women. This was Sakyadhita's first U.S. conference. The Claremont Colleges added the dimension of bringing together Buddhist women academics and practitioners.

I was fortunate to attend sessions of the conference, commuting the short distance between Los Angeles and Claremont, and to present the opening plenary talk on American Zen Buddhism. When I arrived, I noticed that although we were all women united in Buddhist practice, the diversity of our traditions, cultures, and lifestyles was striking. For me the conference provided an opportunity to step back and look at American Zen, specifically American Soto Zen, and my own practice as a unique subset of a much larger and varied Buddhist tradition.

The conference offered a wide-range of topics and activities. Twice each day, participants received meditation instruction from Zen, Tibetan, and Vipassana teachers, both American and Asian. Buddhist women today are in the unique position of choosing practice from among many Buddhist traditions. Each tradition, living side-by-side on American soil, also influences the others. So not only is Soto Zen being shaped

by the active practice and leadership of women in an American cultural setting, but also by close contact with other Buddhist traditions.

The meditation practice periods provided a solid grounding for discussions on many challenging topics. Plenary talks and panels were presented on the issues of gender, race, and class; of inclusion and exclusion, and ordination and nunneries. In smaller workshops, we discussed topics such as feminism and Buddhism, Buddhism and human rights, relations between teachers and disciples, using Dharma to recognize and transcend differences, Dharma in everyday life, gender and sexual issues, the recent scholarship on Buddhist women, and women as Buddhist teachers.

In meeting with Buddhist women from different traditions and cultures, as a Soto Zen practitioner, I was shaken from my points of view and opened to a broader view of women's practice. Participants expressed that their instincts about women's practice, which often remain unspoken in their own sanghas, were supported and reaffirmed in the company of the larger sangha of women. Many women spoke about awakening to themselves as women Dharma practitioners. Most remember the time and place of their awakening, followed by the challenge of practicing and being trained by male teachers in male-dominated traditions and structures. Women expressed fear in challenging the structures of their traditions, and, at the same time, felt a deep need to find a relationship that is not oppressive between the masculine models of their tradition and their own expression of the feminine.

The theme of inclusion and exclusion also arose many times around the issue of race and sexuality. "Buddhism," to paraphrase a Black American participant, "lags behind the Bank of America in including non-White participants." The issues unique to lesbian practitioners were also at the forefront of discussion. We were called upon to recognize in our institutions and ourselves, that in this egalitarian teaching of Buddhism, there are great inequalities when it manifests in our human life.

The practice and discussions of the conference days were wonderfully balanced by the evening programs, which featured creative performances by Buddhist women artists. By immersing ourselves in the important topics raised in this North American Conference on Buddhist Women, we women were challenged to be fearless in revealing the Dharma *as our lives* and in trusting the expressions and forms that arise from the depths of our practice as authentic expressions of Buddhism.

*Sensei Wendy Egyoku Nakao is a third-generation American Zen teacher who is the Head Priest and Head Teacher of The Zen Center of Los Angeles/Buddha Essence Temple. She is a successor of Roshi Bernie Tetsugen Glassman who is ZCLA's Abbot and Maezumi Roshi's first successor.*

## Being Where I Am: The Experience of Sesshin at Hokyoji

By Theresa Sosan Flynn



Theresa Sosan Flynn, Clouds in Water Zen Center

More than 20 people gathered at Hokyoji in southeastern Minnesota for a seven-day "Gathering of the Soto Sangha" sesshin on June 5-12, 1998.

Led by Shohaku Okumura, the sesshin was co-sponsored by the Soto Zen Education Center and Minnesota Zen Center. Taiken Yokoyama and Katagiri Roshi

dharma heirs Karen Sunna, Joen Snyder O'Neal and Mike Port also lectured to the group.

I was ordained by Mike Port last November, so you could say that Katagiri Roshi, founder of Minnesota Zen Center, is my dharma grandfather. He is, however, a grandfather I never knew because he died before I began my Zen practice. I had read his books, heard of his teachings and had been to Minnesota Zen Center, but I had never visited Hokyoji. Mike encouraged me to go and I was happy to do so, although a bit unsure about practice at this new place. What would it be like?

Upon arrival, I was stunned by the beauty of the setting. The green rolling hills, abundant wildflowers, singing birds and stately pine trees seemed as though they might conspire to wake me up. The fact that most of the group (myself included) would be sleeping in tents -- close to the earth -- only emphasized this connection between nature and the mind of enlightenment.

It would be difficult to summarize all of the teachings I heard during the sesshin. The clouds taught me generosity by giving cool weather and gentle rain. The flowers taught that beauty can be found in simplicity and in simply being. The teachings I received from the human teachers are too numerous to recount; however, the theme of parenting stood out most for me.

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*"The experience of sitting a sesshin while pregnant, and knowing that the pregnancy could end at any moment, is certainly a way to bring the great matter of life and death into the forefront of consciousness."*

Theresa Sosan Flynn

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Joen talked about how her father taught her to stand up against the ocean waves, and how her spiritual father, Katagiri Roshi, taught her to stand up against the waves of life circumstance. Karen talked about being a mother, giving of herself to raise a son, and the challenge of doing Zen practice in the early years when her son was very young.

Shohaku remarked that it wasn't often in dharma talks that one would hear about what it was like being a daughter or being a mother, and perhaps it was time we heard more about

these topics. Taiken talked about the difficulty of being a father to his children when he is also a teacher. His devotion to the dharma, coupled with his obvious love and concern for his wife and children, brought tears to my eyes.

I was very attuned to this theme because of the condition I was in at the time. Just a few days before the sesshin began, I had found out that I was pregnant. I didn't tell many people about this because it was so new. Also, I had experienced a miscarriage just two months before, so the possibility of this pregnancy not continuing seemed very real to me. Actually, the pregnancy has continued and I am now four and a half months along. My husband and I look forward to having the baby in late January.

The experience of sitting a sesshin while pregnant, and knowing that the pregnancy could end at any moment, is certainly a way to bring the great matter of life and death into the forefront of consciousness. I was highly aware of the tenuousness of life and of the beauty inherent in that very tenuousness.

Shohaku talked about having faith; that faith is like knowing that the sun is always shining even though where we live is below the clouds. Sometimes I think that I want to live above the clouds; I want to be in that place of no separation. At this sesshin, I looked at that desire and realized that -- if I were in that place -- there would be no sun, no clouds, no rain, no beautiful meadow, no pregnancy, no miscarriage, no gentle breeze caressing my face. There was some sadness in that realization, and the hope that maybe, instead of wanting to be somewhere else, I could just be right where I am.

This will be my first child. I'm not sure how I will be a priest and a mother at the same time. I think it will have something to do with being right where I am instead of wanting to be somewhere else.

I am grateful for my teacher, Mike Dosho Port, and my community, Clouds in Water Zen Center, for supporting me. I am also grateful for my time at Hokyoji and all the teachers I met there. I am grateful to Katagiri Roshi, without whom I would not be where I am today. Finally, I am grateful to the Soto Zen Education Center and Minnesota Zen Center for making this sesshin possible. Gassho to all.

*Theresa Sosan Flynn has studied and practiced Zen for six years. She is a student of Mike Dosho Port and was ordained by him in November 1997. She holds a Master's degree in Counseling Psychology. Rev. Flynn is currently serving as Ino and Management Assistant for Clouds in Water Zen Center, in St. Paul.*



Participants enjoy natural beauty in southeastern Minnesota for Hokyoji sesshin June 1998

## From Ignorance to Bliss: Five Years of Learning

### What It Means to Be a Priest's Wife

By Jennifer Emyo Nakayama



Jennifer Emyo Nakayama at home with her daughter, Erin

Prior to my entering our small temple in northern Japan, I had no idea what an ordinary parish temple was all about. I'd practiced and been ordained a priest in an American Zen Center. I'd practiced in a Japanese *senmon nisodo* (training temple for women) and a *senmon sodo* (training temple for men), but never lived in a parish temple; that is, a temple not specifically set up for training priests.

I'd heard about temple life, including the negative aspects, and had known priests who grew up in temples who would eventually become successors to their fathers as head priests. Yet, I was totally ignorant about life in a temple and what the role of the head priest's wife would be.

Now that I've been in that role for five years as an American wife of a Japanese priest, I am beginning to understand it a little more.

#### The Role of Priests' Wives Continues to Evolve

Historically, priests in the Soto Zen Sect have been able to marry for only a few generations. Prior to the Meiji Era (post 1868) priests did not marry, so the issue of the wife's role in temple life was irrelevant. With the possibility of marriage, came the question of what role wives should play in temple life. To this day, the question is still an issue.

Soto Sect Headquarters issued some guidelines with regard to its expectations for priests' wives, and there has been much discussion around this matter. Yet, to a great extent, the role of the head priest's wife is defined by the cultural expectation of Japanese society, just like that of non-temple wives in Japan -- and it is changing. Secondly, their role is defined by the history of each individual temple.

As Americans, we may think (as I did) that all Soto Zen temples in Japan are alike and operate similarly because they are all of one sect. In reality, this isn't the case at all. Each temple has its own history of interaction between head priests and parishioners. Each parish has its own style of interaction between one temple and another, as well. It is this combination of interactions that defines the activities of an individual temple, and as a consequence, the role of the priest's wife in those activities. The wife also makes choices with regard to her own participation.

For example, some temples have guests that arrive quite early in the mornings (6 a.m.), meaning that "someone" (read

"wife") has to be ready to serve tea at that time. Some temples have many ceremonies throughout the year; others do not. Some temples have *zazen* groups; others do not. In some temples, parishioners are very actively involved, while in others they only appear when requiring the services of the head priest.

#### Temple Membership is Based Largely On Tradition

I've been using the term "parishioner," but I should define what I mean by that. Unlike parishioners in Christian churches, or for that matter, members in Zen Centers, Japanese "danka" (what I call parishioners) are seldom connected to a temple by choice, but by history. That is, they don't join the temple because the priest gives great talks or chants sutras beautifully. They are members because at one point in time their ancestors were assigned membership (a fact of history in the Edo Era when the government used temples to keep tabs on people) or chose to place their family grave at said temple. There are some exceptions, but even in this modern era most new members are relatives or members who wish to build a grave at the temple or are in need of a priest's services for a funeral.

This connection between grave site or funerals and temple is primary in the minds of most Japanese parishioners and defines the relationship with the temple to a great extent. It is neither the teachings of Dogen Zenji nor the practice of *zazen* that motivates people to support a temple; it is the presence of the family grave and/or the offering of memorial service for ancestors that is the basis of most parishioner-temple relationship. This is not to say that no one is interested in *zazen* or Buddhist teachings, but basically the connection is around one's ancestors.

#### Privacy...What's That?

Being a public building, the temple is not an easy place to live. Privacy is minimal by American standards (and modern Japanese, as well!). Parishioners have built the building with their donations and so some feel free to come and go as they like, even if that means walking into your bedroom.

When I first came to our temple no one had lived in the building for 30 years. The previous abbot's wife had hated temple life, so their home was a separate house built with their money, albeit on temple property. The 150-year old building had had a major facelift 15 years ago, but there was really no private space to live in. So, parishioners donated a large amount of money to build two rooms and a toilet for our "private living space." Later I learned that in fundraising, deacons had told members that these rooms would be used for guests during temple events -- a statement somewhat contrary to my idea of "private living space."

Our temple's previous abbot had not been fond of ceremonies, so yearly activities here were few. However, the first few months were extremely difficult for me. There were no doors and almost no solid walls anywhere; just paper and glass sliding door/walls. There was no laundry hookup and few electrical outlets; it was November and the cold wind blew freely throughout the building. Day after day, people

came for meetings or to greet us.

Two weeks after our arrival, the head priest died and his body was brought to the temple for visitation and two funerals. There were meetings after meetings and drinking followed most of those meeting. I felt like I was living in a smoke-filled bar instead of a temple. At times, people were here 24 hours a day. When the kitchen was being used, I couldn't use it nor could we use the bath which is located off the kitchen. The only sink to wash or brush our teeth at was the kitchen sink -- if it wasn't in use.

This was the downside of temple life and I hated it. On top of everything, I was essentially illiterate! I couldn't communicate adequately and hadn't had a chance to get to know anyone yet, nor they me. I didn't know what I was supposed to do either!

However, with the passing of time, deacons realized that this temple was now a place where people lived (and not just the local pub). They added a laundry and doors were put in; we eventually added a sink to the private area. I requested meetings to be held in the tearoom instead of the kitchen tatami area so that I could continue to use the kitchen and/or bath as necessary.

#### **Social Interaction is the Key to Survival For a Temple Wife**

Undoubtedly, parishioners' main concern is having a priest who can reliably perform services requested and take care of the temple. I think they also like that person to be "approachable" in a social sense. I think they want the priest's wife to be friendly, make them feel welcome, and help maintain the building and grounds.

In return, you receive a lot. Sometimes it is rice and vegetables or gifts like sake and cakes; sometimes it is friendship.

I gradually learned more about the social aspects of being a wife at a temple. Even in my native language I was never a "pro" in social interchange. Yet, on a daily basis, I have had to grow in that skill because people come by and I serve tea and chat.

Whenever I go out, there are neighbors to greet and chat with, and being in a small town, I always meet someone I know when I am out on errands. Despite the fact that the local dialect was completely unintelligible to me at first and my skill in Japanese is still far from adequate, I have become a social person more than I ever imagined. Sometimes I am invited to talk to groups; people are very curious as to why an American became a priest's wife since most young Japanese women would never consider marriage to a priest because of the "downside" of temple life.

Sometimes, people want to talk about Buddhism and my being a priest, though I don't actively function as a priest here. Much conversation is about human life; simple things like weather and making pickles -- from a foreigner's view. I also teach English conversation classes at times.

When there is a special event at our temple such as the yearly Obon Segaki, I plan for meals and drinks as necessary, prepare flowers and offerings for the altars, greet parishioners and priests from other temples, serve tea and clean up

afterwards. When it is a big event for many guest, some of our parishioner wives help out in the kitchen. In the end, whenever there is an event, the wife of the head priest is the hostess.

#### **Temple Wives Have a Unique Opportunity to Develop and Share Their Practice**

In addition, there is housekeeping the family area and helping with the main halls; caring for the garden; cleaning the graveyard. This really doesn't seem much different from what is expected of any wife anywhere, but there is another facet of life here which is especially important, although it took me a long time to see it. Without question, the most important work of the priesthood is the transmission of the Dharma. In the case of a small temple such as this one, it is maintaining the Dharma as embodied in the existence of this temple. Whether the temple is large or small, whether parishioners are interested in Buddhist teachings or not, this work is the true work of the priesthood. Living here in the temple, it can become the wife's work too.

There are many wives of priests who know nothing about Buddhism. There are probably a few priests likewise uninformed. There are wives who absolutely hate temple life because, to them, it means living in an old building with no privacy, serving drinks and cleaning up; all work, no salary. Without a doubt, there will always be irksome points to life here. I'd love a room with a floor instead of tatami! But, after attending meetings of temple wives from this parish, I am of the impression that every priest's wife feels about the same to some extent. Differences lie in how each wife deals with those irksome aspects of human life/temple life.

When you look deeper into life here, it is easy to see that although the priest's wife doesn't chant sutras or offer service for the deceased as her husband does, she can participate in the maintenance and transmission of the Buddha Dharma if she chooses to do so. This is done through her caring for and taking care of the temple; caring for and taking care of the human beings that come to the temple (including Hojo-san!). Buddhism is for living beings and, as a wife in a temple, there is a great opportunity to make Buddha's teaching significant to the living. Perhaps because I am also a foreigner, I may have even more of an opportunity to do so. Yet, there are other temple wives who seem to approach their roles in the temple as great opportunities for practice.

As one's focus turns in this direction, the negative aspects of life become manageable, less irritating and finally, unimportant in the overall picture. This has been my experience. The first two or more years here, I thought of leaving every day. Now, if I left, I would miss the chance for real practice that living here presents.

*Jennifer Emyo Nakayama studied at the Minnesota Zen Center and was ordained a priest in 1983 by Katagiri Dainin Roshi. She holds a Master's degree in Japanese History and Religion. She now lives in Niigata, Japan at Chuzanji, where her husband serves as Head Priest.*



## My Zazen Sankyu

(san = to participate humbly; kyu=to inquire or explore)

### Notebook (2)

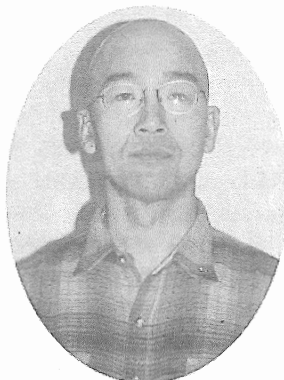
Rev. Issho Fujita

with assistance from Tansetsu Shibata

#### Fragmentary Thought VI

##### <Shoshin-Tanza 1 - Posture and Gravity>

“Sit upright. Leaning to neither left nor right, front nor back (\*1), your ears should be on the same plane as your shoulders and your nose in line with your navel (\*2).”



Rev, Issho Fujita, Valley Zendo

This is the description of Shoshin-Tanza (sitting in correct posture; sitting upright) in the volume of “Manner of Zazen” in Dogen Zenji’s Shobogenzo. (\*1) means that, without tilting left or right, front or back, the central axis of the body should be precisely the same as the direction

of gravity. (\*2) means that head and body should be in place by looking from the sides and from the front/back. Why were these two points presented as the most basic and important conditions of the correct sitting posture?

All things on the ground are always pulled toward the center of the earth by gravity. In this plane of gravity, every form of life survived by harmonizing itself with gravity in various ways. We human beings attained upright posture (= standing with the central axis of the body vertically) after a long evolutionary process. Known also as “anti-gravitational posture”, upright posture cannot exist without uniquely human intention and volition to stand the body upright decisively. (As a proof for this, we lie down when we sleep. It is also difficult for us to maintain upright posture when low in spirit because of disease or fatigue.) I believe that the meaning of zazen can also be studied in the broad context of the history of such relationship between life and gravity.

Besides that, isn’t the word “correct”, as in correct posture, regarded as an adjective describing the quality of the relationship between gravity and posture? Doesn’t correct posture mean that body and the center of the earth are connected in the most stable manner?

Although the posture in which the central axis of the body and the direction of gravity are in complete accord can be regarded as “anti-gravitational” from one viewpoint, we should not forget it is also “pro-gravitational” (= following gravity). When the body is tilted, in order to maintain upright posture, certain muscles will become tense. On the contrary, if various parts of the body are integrated correctly along a vertical line, then the weight is supported by skeletal frame, unnecessary tensions in the muscles is released, and the whole body submits

to the direction of gravity. The subtlety of sitting posture seems to lie in the fact that “anti-gravitational” and “pro-gravitational” states which may seem contradictory at a glance coexist quite naturally. Our relationship to gravity in Shoshin-Tanza is neither an “anti-gravitational” way of fighting with gravity through tense muscles and stiff body, nor a “pro-gravitational” way of being defeated by gravity through flaccid muscles and an untidy limp body. Our body should be neutral and in the middle way. (\*1) quoted above from “Manner of Zazen” is a “body koan” - “You should neither resist gravity nor be defeated by gravity. What are you going to do?” We have to answer this with the realization of “upright/middle/right” posture.

#### Fragmentary Thought VII

##### <Shoshin-Tanza 2 - Head and Trunk>

In addition to (\*2) in “Manual of Zazen” of Shobogenzo, as “the model for engaging the way” in the Pure Standards of Eihei Dogen Zenji, it says, “With the back of your head, straight above your spine“, it is vital to place and maintain the head/neck and the trunk in right alignment.

F. M. Alexander (1869-1955), an Australian, found that wrong postures (= incorrect uses of postures) are related closely to various body and psychological problems. He developed the technique to adjust such incorrect posture. His system, called the Alexander Technique, put the highest emphasis on the correct use of head and neck.

While training in the Alexander Technique, I realized various mistakes of my sitting posture. Particularly, I noticed I need to pay more detailed attention to the positioning of my head and neck.

Because of our developed brain, human beings have a very heavy head. Therefore, the head should be placed above the trunk correctly in a manner that the center of gravity of the head should fall accurately into the vertical line of the trunk. If the head and the trunk are not in correct position, the muscles around the neck have to continually tense in extreme in order to maintain the head above the trunk. Otherwise, the head would collapse, being pulled down by gravity. The sitting posture therefore could not be maintained. This unnecessary tension around the neck will extend to the other parts of the body and affect movement of the whole body negatively. Moreover, because important veins and nerves are concentrated around the neck, unnecessary pressures to the neck could possibly create problems in breathing, voice projection, chewing, swallowing, and in general mental activities. The neck can literally be a bottle’neck” of life.

When the head is positioned above the trunk correctly by following the instruction in (\*2), one can release excessive tension of muscles around the neck without disrupting the central axis of the body. This state is described as “neck free, head forward and up” in the terms of the Alexander Technique. Thus, the head is connected to the trunk naturally and incorporated into the whole sitting posture, and the body axis is unified completely so that “the back lengthens and widens”.

I do believe that we have to study the connection between

the head and the trunk in zazen more deeply based on our practice and experience.

### Fragmentary Thought VIII <Problems in Instruction of Sitting Posture>

Speaking from my own experience in studying the Alexander Technique, I would say that it is extremely difficult to change the long-accustomed "incorrect use of postures" into "correct use". Even when an instructor points out "wrong use", I tend to feel it is still "correct", and feel "correct use" as unnatural. The attachment to the thing which one is accustomed to is strong. The willingness to correct mistakes can also lead to creation of new tension patterns and increase "wrong use" instead.

Therefore, we have to ponder deeply how to instruct the correct sitting posture. Shouting "stretch your back", or straightening the back by touching with *kyosaku* only tend to create an unnatural posture, like the standing posture in the military with the chest thrust forward. Or, being deceived by a sitting posture with what at first glance looks like a straight back, we tend to miss internal tensions within the body. These unnatural postures which cannot be maintained for long periods of time, only serve to deteriorate one's health, and are completely different from *Shoshin-Tanza*.

I hardly believe that the traditional zazen instructions including my own are leading practitioners successfully to *Shoshin-Tanza*. This might be because my understanding of *Shoshin-Tanza* is shallow or incorrect.

Before starting zazen practice, I studied Noguchi Exercise, an "exploration of the human being", for five years from its founder, Michizo Noguchi. I learned numerous lessons from him. Among them, the practice of standing a raw egg on end had one of the strongest impacts on me. My current model for *Shoshin-Tanza* is this "egg balanced on end".

"What is the standing raw egg telling us? ...Its inside is not tense and remains fluid, while the outer structure remains strong and firm. It is at ease, calm, clear and magnanimous. It is not standing forcefully with props, nor pulling net. ...it is standing because it already possesses conditions to stand. It is neither fabrication nor deception." ("Human Beings as Primordial Life" by Michizo Noguchi)

"A raw egg is standing as if it is the matter of course. It does not particularly look like bearing its weight. Rather, it is standing calmly, transparently, and serenely." ("Consulting (the Oracle of) Weight" by Michizo Noguchi).

Isn't to sit with these qualities *Shoshin-Tanza*? Or, is *Shoshin-Tanza* for creating these conditions inside the body? In *Shoshin-Tanza*, while the body sits immovably like a mountain, the internal body is released, unwound and relaxed in every corner. Except for minimally necessary muscles, everything is at rest quietly. The more relaxed the muscles, the more sensible one would be, and the relationship with gravity will be adjusted more minutely and accurately,

thus, more muscle relaxation, and increased sensibility.... likewise, *Shoshin-Tanza* gets deepened infinitely. I, at least, would like to strive for *Shoshin-Tanza* like this. To get oneself closer to *Shoshin-Tanza*, to sit for some reason or other, or, to sit recklessly is not a right approach; meticulous Sankyū is essential.

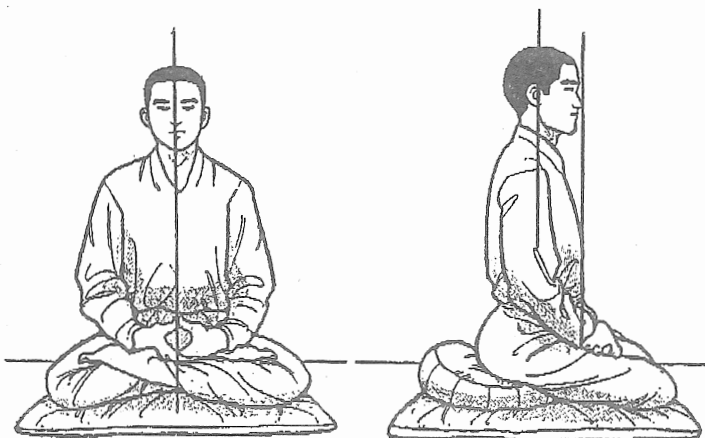
I am sorry to say that I could find neither a specific means nor an instruction method to foster the zazen of mine and others toward these directions in the tradition of zen. I am now exploring different avenues of instruction, borrowing greatly from Noguchi Exercise and Alexander Technique.

### Fragmentary Thought IX <Meditation Practice in Buddhism - Shamata and Vipasyana>

Suppose meditation is defined as "techniques which are used intentionally and self-consciously to change the mental condition of human beings into a certain preferable state." Philosophical discussions and practical studies on these meditation practices have occupied a position at the heart of Buddhism. Although Buddhism has various meditation techniques, I think that these can be categorized into two large groups by their purposes.

The two different types of meditation practices are "shamata" and "vipasyana". Shamata is described in *Awakening of Faith* as follows: "To put a stop to all characteristics of the world of sense, objects, and of the mind." The objective of this is to stop all mental activities by training one's mind so that it can concentrate on a certain object (single-pointedness, samadhi) without being affected by external circumstances and internal thoughts. This type of practice is trying to reach nirvana by the cessation of the activity of the mind, assuming emotional attachments (desires, clinging to self) are the major causes of human sufferings.

On the contrary, vipasyana is described in *Awakening of Faith* as follows: "Perceive distinctly characteristics of the causally-conditioned phenomena." The objective of this is to gain insights (wisdom) into truth by observing one's psychological and physiological processes carefully and vividly, or, by internalizing basic doctrines of Buddhism repeatedly. This type of practice is an attempt to reach awakening of truth (enlightenment) by a paradigm shift in



recognition and perception, assuming the fundamental problem of human beings lies in unenlightenment (fundamental ignorance of the true nature of things).

Shamata and vipasyana are often used as shamata-vipasyana in one word. Awakening of Faith says "One should practice both shamata and vipasyana side by side." It is also often said "Vipasyana is mastered based on shamata so that both of them are in an inseparable relationship." However, as contrasted above, I think both are essentially different undertakings. Logically speaking, the complete state of shamata seems to have no capacity to develop to vipasyana. Anyway, I think that various meditation methods in Buddhism can be categorized, put in an order sequence, and analyzed on a spectrum which runs from shamata to vipasyana with a varying internal tension between the two. For example, we may find meditation with emphasis on shamata, or, on vipasyana, or, meditation combining shamata and vipasyana in a certain ratio, etc. Then, where should we position zazen of *Shikan-Taza* (just sitting)? Is it possible to position it somewhere between shamata and vipasyana?

As "Fukan-Zazengi" ("Manner of Zazen Recommended Universally to Everyone") by Dogen Zenji says "Stop various functions of your mind and various types of meditation..." If we take these words as they are, *Shikan-Taza* might seem a practice emphasizing shamata and denying vipasyana. I remember reading in a book a long time ago something like "Soto-style zazen is shamata- and samadhi/concentration-centered, while Rinzai-style zazen is vipasyana- and prajna/wisdom-centered..." Though such differentiation/specialization might have taken place later in history, didn't zazen emerge in the first place as a Chinese protest to or transcendence of meditation-oriented shamata/vipasyana practices in Indian Buddhism? If so, isn't zazen based on the totally different context where the framework of shamata/vipasyana is no longer valid?

In relation to this issue, the following words of Dogen Zenji come to mind: "Zazen is not step-by-step meditation." ("Fukan-Zazengi"); "Zazen differs from samadhi or dhyana." (in the fifth Q&A among eighteen Q&A in "Bendowa" ("On Endeavoring the Way")). Aren't these words indicating that zazen recommended by Dogen Zenji has totally different contents from shamata/vipasyana?

If this is true, what kind of genealogy does *Shikan-Taza* have in the history of Buddhism? Where can we find its roots? Can we trace its roots somewhere in the tradition of shamata/vipasyana practices, the mainstream tradition in Buddhism? Or, does it belong to totally different genealogy? Should it be taken as orthodox or heretical? Should it be taken as a mutation emerged in the tradition? I think we need further Sankyū on "genealogy of *Shikan-Taza*".

*Rev. Issho Fujita entered Antaiji in Hyogo Prefecture in 1981 and spent six years there. Following that, he spent one year studying at Myokoji in Fukuoka Prefecture. Rev. Fujita came to Valley Zendo in Massachusetts in 1987 to serve as Resident Director.*

## DOGEN ZENJI'S GENJOKOAN LECTURE (3)

By Rev. Shohaku Okumura  
Soto Zen Education Center

### Text

(4) "Therefore flowers fall down even though we love them, weeds grow even though we dislike them. Conveying oneself toward all things to carry out practice/enlightenment is delusion. All things coming and carrying out practice/enlightenment through the self is realization. Those who greatly realize delusion are buddhas. Those who are greatly deluded in realization are living beings. Furthermore, there are those who attain realization beyond realization and those who are deluded within delusion."

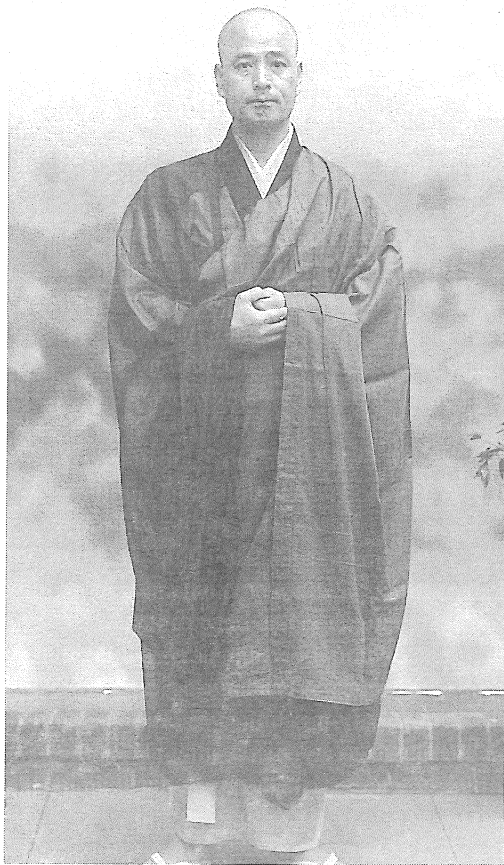
As discussed in previous lectures (1,2), the first three sentences of the Genjo Koan serve as the introduction to the work. In the fourth paragraph illustrated here, Dogen Zenji explains how we can manifest (genjo) the koan (reality). Clearly, in this paragraph he has made a definition of delusion and enlightenment and Buddhas and living beings. From section four to seven Dogen Zenji talks about delusion and enlightenment, deluded living beings and enlightened Buddhas. And in section eight he talks about life and death or arising and perishing.

I would like to give my thoughts on the meaning of this fourth paragraph of the Genjo Koan and how it relates to our daily practice.

### Our life is the Interaction between self and all things

In order to discuss delusion and enlightenment and living beings and Buddha, Dogen Zenji based his thinking on the relationship between the self and the myriad dharmas, or all beings. In his expression *jiko* (自己; self) and *banpo* (万法), *ban* means ten thousand, myriad or numberless; *po* (*ho*) means beings or things; all things that exist. According to Dogen, delusion and enlightenment lie only within the relationship between self and others. It is not a matter of some fixed thing called 'delusion' which exists in our mind that if eliminated, we become enlightened.

When he says "Flowers fall even though we love them and weeds grow even though we dislike them," "we" means *jiko* (self), and flowers and weeds are examples of the myriad things. Flowers just grow, bloom and fall; weeds also grow, luxuriate and wither. They are neither good nor bad by nature. They just grow; they are just living. And yet, usually we human beings are not neutral. Within the relationship with flowers or weeds, since we like flowers, we love them when they bloom; and since we don't like weeds, we are not happy to see them. Even though we love flowers, flowers fall so we feel sad and disappointed. Even though we dislike weeds, weeds grow very quickly. Weeds are so strong and we sometimes get angry about that.



Rev. Shohaku Okumura, Soto Zen Education Center

Weeding is one of the main jobs for Buddhist priests in Japanese temples; especially in the summer, they grow so quickly! In August in Japan we have the O-bon ceremony, one of the main annual events in Japanese Buddhist temples. Before O-bon begins, temple priests have to pick all the weeds and make sure all the temple buildings and the compound are completely clean. We have to weed everywhere in the temple grounds and we try to pick one by one. When we finish, new weeds are already starting to grow in the first place we cleaned. Then we have to start from the beginning again. Weeds are stronger than we are so we are always behind. We get sometimes angry and sometimes sad. This is the same with our delusions. If we are not the person who weeds, we can be "objective" and say weeds are just weeds, without liking and disliking. But, when we ourselves have to do the work, it is very difficult to say that weeds are just weeds. Everything exists within a relationship with us in our actual life, as long as we are alive. We cannot see things from outside of the world as observers, as we imagine God does.

Dogen Zenji talks about the relationship between self and all beings and he says no being is neutral for us, that is, we are not neutral toward any beings. There are things we like, things we think useful, meaningful or valuable. If we think them not meaningful, not valuable, we dislike or ignore them. There is no such a dichotomy from the side of the myriad dharmas, but within the relationship between self and the myriad dharmas,

those things occur. Within the relationship between self and all beings, there are good and bad, positive and negative, right and wrong. We don't really see the myriad dharmas as they are. Because we create something in our consciousness, we create categories. We think about the things we encounter and we name them, assign value to them and put them into a certain category, good or bad, valuable or not valuable, likable or not likable. Our life is really created by our encounters and we create our own world of likes and dislikes. Within this world of likes and dislikes, the myriad dharmas are not really perceived as they are. We don't really see them as they are. Things we like look much bigger than they are and things we hate also look much bigger than they are. Things we are not interested in become much smaller or we don't see them at all. The actual world we are living in is the world we create based on the encounter of our minds with all beings.

### Early Buddhism

This relationship between self and all beings is expressed in the philosophy of Buddhism in each tradition. In the case of early Buddhism, in order to explain the relationship between self and all dharmas, teachers used a twelve-sense field or *Junisho* (十二処) in Japanese; this means the six sense organs: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind, and the six objects of each sense organ: form (color), sound, smell, taste, touch and *ho*, that is dharma, and in this case it means the object of mind. We see color or shape with our eyes, we hear sound with our ears, we smell with our nose and we taste with the tongue. We feel touch with our body and there is the object of our mind. We sometimes have a vision of something we don't see with our eyes; or we can think about what we don't see or what we don't hear. For example, a concept or idea is an object of our mind. Those things are dharmas. The twelve-sense fields is an explanation of the reality that we are in a relationship with myriad dharmas through our sense organs and their objects.

Early Buddhists also had a category of eighteen elements; *juhachi-kai* (十八界). The eighteen elements refer to the six sense organs, the six objects of the sense organs and the consciousness belonging to each sense organ - *roku shiki* (六識). When the sense organs, that is, body and mind encounter an object, something is caused in our minds that is called consciousness. Eye-consciousness is the consciousness caused by the encounter of eye and color or shape.

In early Buddhism our life was analyzed this way in order to show there is no such a thing called ego or atman that can exist without relationship between body/mind and its objects. Our life is a collection of numberless elements and the encounter of these eighteen elements; there's no such thing called a fixed ego which does not change. Only those elements exist.

### The Heart Sutra

In the Heart Sutra *mu* (no) is placed in front of these eighteen elements. Early Buddhism analyzed our life this way

to show there are no such things called ego or atman, but the Heart Sutra says those elements have no existence either. They have no substance, they are just phenomena. This is the meaning of emptiness.

The first and second sentences of *Genjo-Koan* correspond with these two teachings. There are encounters or connections of the six sense organs and objects, or dharmas, and consciousness; but in the Heart Sutra those elements, the contact and the consciousness caused by that contact are also empty. That's what Mahayana Buddhism teaches us in order to enable us to be free from attachment to anything, neither self nor objects.

### Dogen Zenji's standpoint

In the *Maka Hannya Haramitsu*, Dogen Zenji comments on the Heart Sutra by saying, "The twelve sense fields are twelve instances of prajna. There are eighteen instances of prajna: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind; form, sound, smell, taste, touch, object of mind as well as the consciousness of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind." So again Dogen Zenji expresses the same idea positively. Dogen Zenji changes the Heart Sutra over again. The Heart Sutra says those elements don't exist, they are empty. But Dogen Zenji says there are such elements; they exist and they are instances of prajna. Prajna means wisdom which sees emptiness. Those eighteen things, all elements in our lives, are prajna. Prajna is not a kind of way our brain functions but the way each thing is. Each and every thing is itself prajna because everything expresses the reality of impermanence, egolessness, that is, emptiness. By expressing this in that way he tries to show reality of all beings, which includes being and non-being, form and emptiness.

That is why he says in *Maka Hannya Haramitsu*, "Form is nothing but form; Emptiness is nothing but emptiness." When we say form is emptiness, in our mind there are two things: form and emptiness and we say those two things are one. But if truly form is emptiness we don't need to say form is emptiness because before we say emptiness it is already included. If really form is emptiness, when we say emptiness, form is already there and that is what we really experience in our daily life. We encounter, for example, a flower. The flower is really there and usually we think, "This flower is now in front of my eyes, it is really beautiful, but it will fall in the future." That is what we think. And we don't think that is a mistaken way of thinking. But as the undeniable reality there is only the flower blooming; there is no falling down when it is blooming. But in our thinking we think "it is a flower, it is blooming now. But it was a seed in the past and it will fall and form seeds for the next generation". We think, "This flower is there but it's empty, it is impermanent, there is no fixed substance in this flower." That is how we think, and how we understand the Buddha's teaching when we study it. What Dogen Zenji is saying is that at the actual moment of the flower's blooming, the flower is just the flower. He doesn't say "we should think that flower is empty," because the flower is actually empty

even when we don't say so.

Prajna is not our way of thinking or understanding, but prajna is this flower itself. It shows the real emptiness and real egolessness. Prajna is the flower itself. That's why he says, "form is nothing but form, emptiness is nothing but emptiness. One hundred blades of grass, ten thousand things." 'One hundred blades of grass, ten thousand things' are the myriad dharmas or *banpo*. When we really see a flower clearly and directly, actually the flower and our self, or *jiko*, are not truly two. The flower and ourselves are really one thing, and when we see a flower we love the flower. The flower is part of me and I am part of the flower. One 'life' force unfolds itself or manifests itself as self and object. Actually the flower and I are one 'life'.

These things (like and dislike) happening inside of ourselves and outside of ourselves are the manifestation of one-real-life or Buddha mind or Buddha's life. That is what Dogen Zenji shows us in this *Genjo Koan*. And how we can see things in that way and how we can live in that way is what he discusses in the *Genjo-Koan*.

We usually think this self is subject and *banpo* is object and these correspond to each other, and subject thinks about object and judges or evaluates the object. This is a common way to think about our life. But this common way of understanding is not necessarily true. According to Buddhadharma this is not reality. In Reality, self is part of all these myriad dharmas; we are part of nature, we are part of the world, we are not outside of the world. We are a part of the myriad dharmas. The myriad dharmas means everything including the self. When we say 'all the dharmas,' the self is already included. If we get out of 'all dharmas,' we cannot live. Fish are swimming in the water, birds are flying in the sky and if they get out of the sky or water they will die. It is the same thing with us. In this example, sky or water are *banpo* and the self is like the fish or bird. We are inside the myriad dharmas. This is a really important point because our basic way of thinking is based on the separation between subject and objects. I am subject and everything outside is object. But that is not the real truth.

In the next sentence Dogen Zenji makes a definition of delusion and enlightenment:

### Text

"Conveying oneself toward all things to carry out practice/enlightenment is delusion and all things coming and carrying out practice/enlightenment through the self is realization."

Realization or satori and delusion or *mayoi* lies only in the relationship with self and others. I don't think delusion is a good translation for the Japanese or Chinese word *mayoi*. 'Mei' (迷) and "go (悟り)", or *mayoi* and satori. 'Mei', I think, is a mental or psychological condition caused by the delusion or illusion created by our consciousness. Within consciousness things are distorted; that is delusion. We don't see things as they are. *Mayoi* is not delusion itself but is a

psychological condition caused by the delusion, that is, a confusion. When we don't see the things clearly, we cannot make a right judgment, and we are not sure which way we should go. *Mayoi* is comparable to being lost. This part of kanji "米" shows the sound "mei". This looks like 'an intersection', and we don't know which way to go. This part (去) of this kanji means 'walking'. When we walk, our destination should be clear. Otherwise, we will be lost in confusion, we will feel uneasy, have anxiety, do wrong things, and have lots of problems. This is the condition of suffering in samsara.

I think *mayoi* is a psychological condition caused by delusion or lack of the wisdom to see things as they are. We don't know which way we should go or which action we should take and we are always uncertain. I think that's what Dogen Zenji is saying in the next sentence: "Conveying one's self toward all things to carry out practice/enlightenment is delusion." This means we take ourselves, our distorted idea, and desires based on such distortion, toward all beings and try to find the truth or reality. We try to see and catch the reality with our own personal capability. We try to make ourselves enlightened and try to grasp the Reality. We try to see reality with our mind and try to put everything under the control of the self and make our life stable and peaceful.

In the case of Buddhist practice, Dogen Zenji is talking about practice/enlightenment. This attitude of conveying one's self toward all beings and carrying out practice/enlightenment with the power or ability of the self; the personal willpower and effort of our self, and putting things including our life under "our" control, putting them in "order" -- this attitude is delusion according to Dogen Zenji.

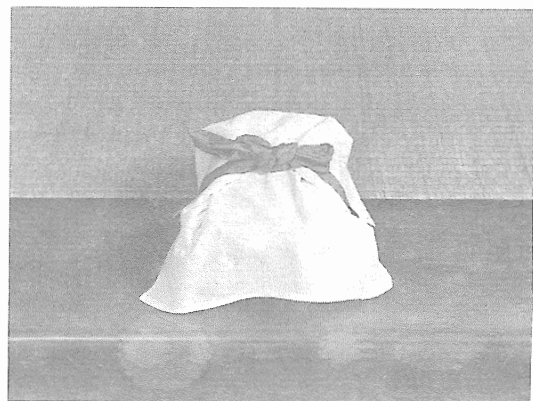
"And all things coming and carrying out practice/enlightenment through the self is realization." The subject of practice is not this person (self), but all beings. To practice means to awake to the self that is connected with all beings. The subject of practice is this "all beings" and this "all beings" is the ten thousand dharmas. Dogen says that these myriad dharmas are themselves Buddhadharma. Actually the way all dharmas are is the dharma body of Buddha-that means Buddha itself. We are part of all dharmas. We practice on the basis of this awakening to the reality that we are part of all dharmas. That means we are part of Buddha. It is not me that practices, but the buddha practices the buddha's practice through me. In our practice of Zazen and in our daily activity as our Bodhisattva practice it is not a matter of one's actions with one's willpower and effort, but the myriad dharmas, or all beings, carrying out this practice through one's body and mind.

That is why when Dogen Zenji talks about Zazen he says that Zazen is not the practice of human beings to make human beings into Buddha; Zazen is itself Buddha's practice. Dogen Zenji's definition of Buddha is *Jin Daichi* (尽大地) whole great earth. This expression means self together with all beings. Though we are really deluded human beings and though our thinking is self-centered, we still are connected with all beings. And yet in our mind, in our thinking, the reality is topsy turvy;

we think 'I am the center of the world' or 'such and such are my possessions' and that everything in this world can be used to make 'me' happy. That's the basic idea of modern individual civilization. But according to Buddha's teaching or Dogen's teaching, this is really an upside down way to view things. Our practice of Zazen enables us to turn it aright and we can then see that we are part of the world, that we are part of nature, we are part of the Buddha. We don't need to personally become Buddha, but we need to awake to the reality that from the beginning, we are living Buddha's life.

Our practice of Zazen doesn't make us become Buddha; our practice enables us to live out the Buddha's life. Still, in our mind or consciousness, we are deluded. But by letting go of our thought, of our consciousness, we actualize the self that is connected with all dharmas. This is not one's self awakening to reality, but Zazen awakes to Zazen, or dharma awakes to the Dharma and Buddha awakes to Buddha. Zazen practices Zazen. It is not that this person (self) practices Zazen to become enlightened. This is the meaning of Dogen Zenji's expression "practice and enlightenment are one". Through this practice the universal and interpenetrating reality manifests itself. That is the meaning of Genjo Koan in my understanding.

- 1) Okumura, Shohaku.  
"Dogen Zenji's Genjo-Koan Lecture."  
Soto Zen Journal, November 1997: 10-14.
- 2) Okumura, Shohaku.  
"Dogen Zenji's Genjo-Koan Lecture (2)."  
Soto Zen Journal, April 1998: 10-14.



## Commemoration Activities are Planned for the 800th Anniversary of Dogen Zenji's Birth and the 750th Anniversary of his Death

Dogen Zenji, the founder of Japanese Sotoshu was born in 1200 and died in 1253. Sotoshu and Eiheiiji will celebrate his birth in the year 2000 and plan to have memorial services in 2002. Many commemorative events will take place in Japan.

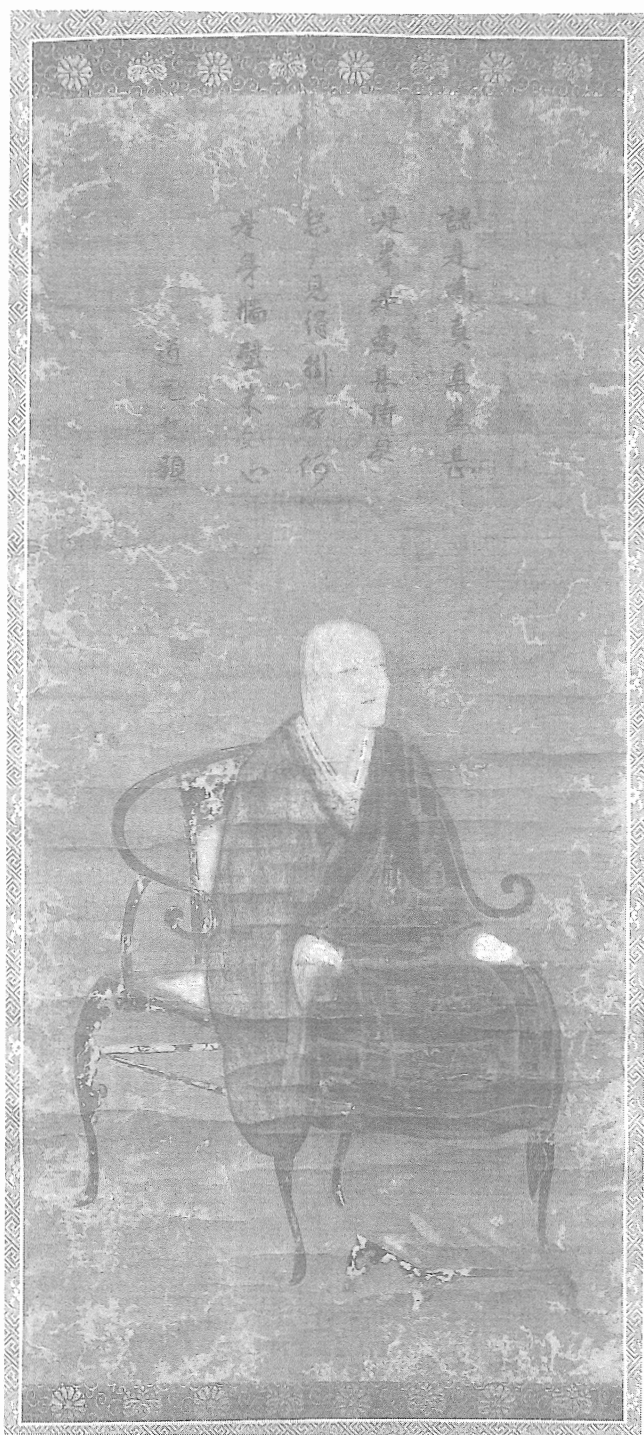
In his writing about the basic spirit of these commemorative activities, Rev. Ekiho Miyazaki, ninety-seven year old abbot of Eiheiiji, articulated Dogen Zenji's message for the twenty first century in three points.

- (1) Study the self.
- (2) The life of the individual human being is Buddha's life.
- (3) Nature is the work of Buddha.

In the United States, on Oct. 23 - 24, 1999, a symposium on Dogen Zenji will be held at Stanford University in Northern California. Ten speakers including Japanese and American scholars and Zen teachers will be invited to discuss Dogen Zenji's teachings and their meaning for the present and future world. Soto Zen Education Center will help to organize this historical symposium.

Another activity in this country is the English translation of the "Study of Tenzo-kyokun." This book is a collection of essays by many modern Japanese scholars and Soto Zen teachers on Tenzo-kyokun (Dogen Zenji's instructions for the cook in Zen monasteries). This book was originally published in 1978 by Eiheiiji. According to the plan, the first draft will be made by Japanese Kaikyoshi's and the final draft will be made with help from an American Zen scholar and two American Soto Zen priests, one a translator and the other an editor.

Soto Zen Education Center is very pleased to participate in these commemorative activities. We hope these two activities will stimulate Soto Zen in America to grow further.



DOGEN ZENJI

# NEWS

## FROM THE SOKANBU AND EDUCATION CENTER

**R**ev. Gengo Akiba Sokan was installed as the head priest of Zenshuji in a ceremony in Los Angeles on May 29, 1998.

**R**ev. Risai Furutani resigned as administrative secretary of Soto Zen Education Center on July 31, 1998. He returned to Japan to take over the position as head priest of his home temple in Gunma, Japan. In order to expand the work of the Soto Zen Education Center, Rev. Sojun Weitsman, Rev. Ikki Nambara and Rev. Shuichi Kurai have been added to the administrative staff.

**T**he general meeting of the Association of Soto Zen Buddhists was held at Catalina Island, California on September 5~7, 1998. Rev. Koki Nakamura and Rev. Shuten Kato from Shumucho joined 15 Kaikyoushi and their family members at the meeting. It was decided as an organizational matter to ask Shumucho to recognize ASZB as the Sokanbu in the United States.

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Shohaku Okumura, Editor  
Taiken Yokoyama, Assistant Editor  
Please address all inquiries  
or comments  
to:  
Soto Zen Education Center  
123 So. Hewitt Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Phone: 213-617-0100  
Fax: 213-617-0200

### *Soto Zen Education Center Activity Schedule (April to October, 1998)*

[Dharma Study Group]

*November 1, 1998, January 24, 1999, February 28, 1999.*

Led by Shohaku Okumura at Zenshuji in Los Angeles, CA from 10:30 am.

For more information call SZEC (213) 617-0100. TEXT: Shobogenzo Genjo-koan.

[Lecture series on Buddhism]

*November 1, 1998:*

at Yokoji Zen Mountain Center in Mountain Center, CA.

Led by Rev. Tenshin Fletcher. Call Zen Mountain Center (909) 659-5272.

*January 16, 1999:*

from 10:10 am at Berkeley Zen Center in Berkeley, CA.

Led by Rev. Sojun Weitsman. Call Berkeley Zen Center (510) 845-2403.

*March 13, 1999:*

from 9:00 am at Iowa City Zen Center in Iowa.

Led by Rev. Shohaku Okumura. Call Iowa City Zen Center (319) 354-1997.

[Sesshin]

*December 6~13, 1998 (Rohatsu Sesshin):*

at Kanzeon Zen Center in Salt Lake City, UT.

For more information and registration, call Kanzeon Zen Center (801) 328-8414.

*January 31~February 7, 1999 (Nehane Sesshin):*

at Kojin-an Zendo in Oakland, CA.

For more information and registration, call Soto Zen Education Center (213) 617-0100.