

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

(3)

by Gengo Akiba

Rev. Gengo Akiba,
General Director

I would like to continue relating these stories about Dogo and Ungan's from Dr. Yanagida Seizan's translation of the Sodo-shu (The Collection of the Ancestral Hall).

As I mentioned in the previous issue, when Ungan wanted to go to see Issan-Osho at Hyakujo-Zenji's temple, his dharma brother Dogo persuaded Ungan not to go there. Instead, Ungan returned to Yakusan Zenji's temple.

Today, my talk will be about Ungan after he came back to Yakusan-Zenji with the help of Dogo. This episode is from Sodo-shu, Chapter 16, "Nansen-no-sho".

Dogo visited Nansen-Osho with Ungan. Nansen-Osho asked Dogo, "What is your name?"
Dogo said, "My name is Enchi (perfect enlightenment)."
"What is the state of mind beyond the wisdom of enlightenment?"
Dogo answered, "It is obvious. If I try to explain that state of mind horns will grow from my head."

A few days later, as Dogo and Ungan were repairing their robes in front of the So-do (meditation hall), Nansen was getting ready to take a walk and saw Dogo. Nansen again asked his question.

"Chi Joza!" ("Chi" is Dogo's Way name and a "Joza" is

a Buddhist monk before becoming a head monk, or Shuso.) "You told me a few days ago that it is not possible to discuss the state of mind beyond the wisdom of enlightenment. If one tries to explain it, horns will grow from his head. If that is so, how have you been practicing perfect wisdom in your daily life?"

Dogo stood up silently and walked down to the Sodo and waited until Nansen-Osho had left.

Shortly after he came back, Ungan asked Dogo, "Nansen-sensei asked you a question. Why didn't you answer? I know it is easy for you to answer?"

Dogo replied, "My senior dharma brother, you are very clever."

Ungan was puzzled by his answer. He went to Nansen-Osho and said, "A while ago, you asked a question of my younger dharma brother Enchi but he didn't answer your question. What kind of answer were you expecting?"
Nansen-Osho said, "Dogo is something else, I think he understood it well. He can easily join the animal realm."

"Tell me, my teacher, what is the animal realm?"

"Don't you remember?" Nansen said. "If someone tries to explain the state of mind beyond the wisdom of enlightenment, horns will grow from his head. If one makes a statement that is 'the absolute truth', then it is not the absolute truth any more. You are better off experiencing as an animal would, without discursive mind."

This story is well known from Iruichugyo's koan: why the Buddhas and bodisattvas came into the secular world to save sentient beings from suffering, and Sotogoi, the five states of practice through the relationship between ultimate reality and phenomena. This was expounded by Tung-Shan Liang-Chieh; 1) phenomena identical with ultimate reality, 2) ultimate reality identical with phenomena, 3) ultimate reality, 4) phenomena, and 5) the realm beyond both of them. (Cf., *Tozan-goi KenKetu* is the source for this paragraph.)

Nansen often encouraged people to be like animals. There is a famous Nansen saying that goes like this: "When you are in the East, be like a mule, at West, be like a horse. Get rid of discriminating mind, go beyond the wisdom of enlightenment

and just practice *Senkomitsuyo* ("senko" means one's daily action is identical with The Way - "mitsuyo" means, practice secretly, working within, like a fool or an idiot). *Senkomitsuyo* is not just an idea. It is about actively understanding Buddha's teaching and practicing Buddhadharma.

Yuima (or Vimalakirti) was a rich layman in the contemporaneous with the Buddha. It is said that he taught *Sariputra* through perfect silence that the law of nonduality is beyond description. Yuima said that Buddha's way is to go through the world where one must be punished for whatever sins he has committed. It is one of the superior interpretations of Buddhism. Nansen is even more superior because he did not merely understand, he practiced whatever he believed in his daily life and actions. I think he was quite remarkable.

In his Dharma talks Nansen often expressed his unique understanding of Buddhism. I am going to introduce some of his *teisho* (Dharma talk) from *Sodo-shu*, Chapter 16, "Nansen-no-sho". When Nansen gave a Dharma talk he always said, "Nowadays, we have many Zen experts, but we can't find any Zen fools."

"Everybody! Don't misunderstand it. If you want to realize the most important Great Truth, you should go back to the time before Buddha, when there were no titles, no status, no material rewards. Don't let other people know that you are searching for Great Truth. Go quietly into yourself and try to find it. That kind of experience, processing, is much more helpful and meaningful. That's why I'm always telling you that all the priests of the lineage from Buddha don't understand how to be one with now. But wild cats and wild cows have better understanding, because these animals don't have discriminating consciousness. What is the Great Truth? If we start discussing we lose the essence of it. So it is better not to talk. Let's be like animals."

As a point of information, Nansen's understanding was eventually received by Obaku. Obaku is well known for creating this sentence, "There is no great Zen master in the huge country of China."

Dogo understood Nansen's Dharma talks and could digest them into his own wisdom. But Ungan could not understand them at all. Ungan was too clever to be a simpleton.

You may remember that earlier Dogo asked the question, "When we leave our bodies, is it possible to meet each other again?"

Ungan answered, "Where we meet there is no birth and no dying."

Yakusan asked Ungan, "What would you do if you saw death in front of your eyes?"

"But there is no death in front of my eyes." Ungan answered. Yakusan said to him, "Even though you have been 20 years with Hyakujo in the monastery, you think like a townsman." He is so clever that he can conceive of everything with his mind, but it does not come from the depth of his soul.

Dogo was aware of his senior Dharma brother's intellect, so he returned to Yakusan-Zenji, again with Ungan. Because of Dogo's love for Ungan, he wanted to take him to Nansen-Zenji in hopes of opening his wisdom eyes. In his heart Dogo felt that Ungan was better off with Yakusan-Zenji.

Ungan and Dogo went back to Yakusan-Zenji.

"Where have you been?" Yakusan asked.

Ungan answered, "This time I have been to Nansen-Osho's place."

Yakusan asked, "What kind of method is he using to teach his students?"

Ungan told about Nansen's animal story.

Then Yakusan-Osho asked, "Do you really understand what he means by 'the animal's way'?"

Ungan replied, "I didn't understand his method of teaching so that's why I returned."

Yakusan-Zenji had a great laugh.

Right away Ungan asked, "What does it mean to join the animals realm?"

Yakusan said, "I'm so tired. Please go away. You must be tired, too. If you want, you may come back later."

"But, my teacher, I just came back to solve this puzzle with you. Please help me with this."

Yakusan said, "Well, please go away. My shoulder hurts. Some other time." Ungan bowed and left.

Dogo, who was listening outside the door, bit his tongue, realizing that Ungan failed to understand Yakusan's intention. After a while, Dogo visited Ungan.

"My dharma brother, when you went to ask Yakusan-Osho about the animal's way, what was his reply?"

Ungan said, "My teacher didn't answer anything for me."

Dogo was speechless and beside himself over his brother's ignorance.

As the years went by each became abbot of his own temple. At the time of Dogo's death, two of Ungan's disciples visited him, Tozan and Somitsu. Dogo explained to them, "Your master has never understood about Nansen-Osho's animal's way. I regret that when I was with Ungan, I never taught him. Yet Ungan is genuinely Yakusan-Zenji's Dharma holder, even though he did not understand the Great Truth."

These are stories from *Sodo-shu*, Chapter 16, "Nansen-no-sho". This episode is very important for illustrating our actual lineage – Yakusan, Ungan, Tozan. It shows how each had his own process of reaching truth according to the teachings that had been passed down. These episodes help us begin to have an understanding of *Senkomitsuyo* and *Sotogoi*.

I have another reason for focusing on the story of Ungan. We realize that Ungan never received a great enlightenment due to his own personality characteristics. Yet, at the same time, Ungan was Yakusan's Dharma holder. We can see from the story how Dogo makes a point to explaining this to

Ungan's disciples before he dies.

Let us recall an earlier time when Yakusan remarked to Dogo, "Ungan has the vision to see the Way clearly, but he still needs to continue to refine himself."

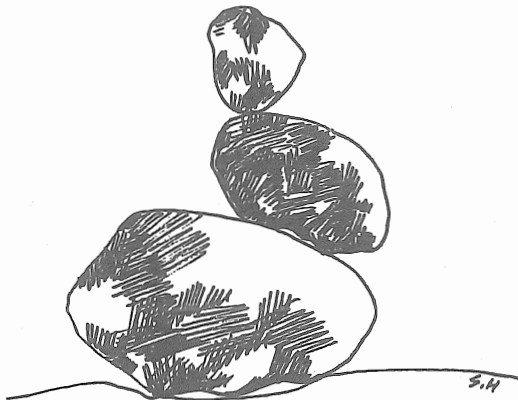
Yakusan also said, "My parents gave me birth and my best friends completed me." Dogo truly acted on the meaning of Yakusan's words. He was Ungan's best friend, silent and gentle, throughout his life. Yet upon his death, he understood he needed to pass very important information to Ungan's true disciples. This is the essence of Soto Zen – to be friends in the Dharma.

In the Rinzai school, there are relationships between masters and disciples. "When a disciple's understanding becomes greater than his master's, this becomes the ultimate virtue of the master." This quotation is from Hyakujo-Zenji, made when he complimented Obaku, who was one of the Rinzai lineage. This is also a Zen characteristic, to surpass one's master.

There are two contrasting ideas here. The Rinzai way originated with Baso. It is Daiki (great capacity) Daiyu (full function is Buddhism) and it is a family tradition. The Soto Way is from the continuity of the lineage of Sekitou, Tozan, Yakusan, and Ungan. It is "Men, men, mitsu, mitsu" (practice with a tight fit) and is also a family tradition.

Finally, I would like to announce that there is a North American Soto Zen Conference at the Zen Mountain Center, Yoko-ji in Los Angeles on May 22-23. The Soto Zen stream, which stretches over one thousand years, is now flowing throughout America. Slowly responding, we are living in the stream, working together and being friends. We should come together without discrimination, going forward with cooperation. Let us continue flowing together so that we will become one big river of Buddhadharma like the Mississippi River.

I invite you to attend this conference and give us your honest opinions and suggestions. Let us go forward with everybody's positive energy and cooperation.



Distinguished Guests Attend Rohatsu Sesshin at Kanzeon Zen Center in Salt Lake City

by Genpo Merzel Roshi



Genpo Merzel Roshi
Kanzeon Zen Center

For the 1998 Rohatsu sesshin, we were fortunate to have with us Rev. Gengo Akiba, General Director of the Soto Zen Administration Office in Los Angeles and Sokan (Bishop) of the Soto School in North America, as well as a number of guest teachers from different training centers in the United States. These included Rev. Shohaku Okumura, Director of the Soto Zen Education Center;

Rev. Sobun Katherine Thanas, Head Teacher of the Santa Cruz Zen Center; Rev. Zuiko Redding, Head Teacher of the Iowa City Zen Center; and Hokai Teah Strozer of the San Francisco Zen Center. Their participation greatly enhanced the sesshin experience for everyone.

I was touched by the respect and graciousness that all our visitors showed toward the practice at Kanzeon Zen Center. We are a young center and have much to learn, especially as regards traditional form. It was very helpful to our trainees to have the opportunity to see fine examples of disciplined practice from our visitors during Rohatsu. When practitioners from several backgrounds sit all together like this, it helps us to go beyond our differences and practice in a spirit of unity.

Not surprisingly, this Rohatsu sesshin attracted a record number of participants. The zendo was filled to overflowing with more than fifty trainees, teachers and guests.

The theme of Rohatsu sesshin this year was transmission of the Dharma. This was a natural focus, considering that five of our senior monks at Kanzeon were in the process of receiving denkai (the lineage and the precepts), a major part of the Dharma transmission ceremony.

Each of our guests was invited to give a talk relating to this theme. These talks highlighted different aspects of Soto Zen practice in the West. Among the visitors were representatives of both the Suzuki Roshi and the Katagiri Roshi lineages. It was interesting and inspiring to hear about their varied experiences of Zen practice. I was struck by their expressions of sincere gratitude to their teachers and their devotion to long hours of sitting over many years. Rev. Akiba and several of the visiting teachers were also kind enough to give daisan (private interviews) to our students. Since the resident teachers at Kanzeon, Rev. Tenkei Coppens Sensei and myself, belong to the Maezumi Roshi lineage, Rohatsu sesshin participants had the rare opportunity to receive instruction from members of three of the major Zen Buddhist traditions that are active in the West.

On the evening of the sixth day of the sesshin, Rev. Akiba assisted me in the denkai ceremony, serving as the kaikyoshi. I deeply appreciated his presence and support on this solemn occasion as well as his warm and entertaining Dharma talk earlier in the week.

The evening following the denkai ceremony, five new monks received ordination. The sesshin finished the next morning with the Shuso Hossen ceremony (Head Monk's talk and Dharma combat), which also concluded the fall Ango (three-month training period).

The participants in our Rohatsu sesshin of 1998 will long remember this eventful week of shared practice.

Biography of Dennis Genpo Merzel, Roshi

Dennis Genpo Merzel, Roshi began formal Zen training at the Zen Center of Los Angeles in 1972. In 1973, under Maezumi Roshi, he received Jukai and Tokudo. In 1979, Genpo Sensei was given the title Dharma-holder (Hoshi) and in 1980, he received Dharma transmission (Shiho). In 1981, he traveled with Maezumi Roshi to Japan, where he received Zuisse (Abbot empowerment in the Soto Zen tradition). His temple, (Hosshinji) is located in Salt Lake City, Utah and provides a training center for an international community of students, called Kanzeon Sangha. Founded in 1984, Kanzeon Sangha includes over 1,000 members in the United States and Europe. Genpo Roshi has three successors: Catherine Genpo Pages, the late John Shodo Flatt and Anton Tenkei Coppens. Genpo Roshi is the author of two books, both a direct reflection of his teaching: The Eye Never Sleeps, published in 1991 by Shambhala and Beyond Sanity and Madness, published in 1994 by Charles E. Tuttle.

The Wholehearted Way: Tassajara Sesshin 1998

Rev. Ekō Little



Rev. Eko Little
Shasta Abbey

I first read about "Tassajara" in 1970 when I paged through an alternative periodical entitled *Moving On*. I was just becoming interested in Zen Buddhism at that time. Since then, "Tassajara" has evolved into Tassajara Zen Mountain Monastery and is always mentioned when the subject arises in books or conversation about Zen Buddhism in the United States.

Unfortunately for me, it wasn't until this past fall, when I received the abbess's gracious invitation to attend sesshin and participate as a guest lecturer, that I was finally able to visit Tassajara and participate firsthand in the religious life of the community which I had heard so much about.

Manifestly, Tassajara is a beautiful place. The monastery's location and natural environment evokes a feeling of peace, meditation, and quiet harmony, yet there is more to the monastery than just pleasant ambience. Those who travel extensively to Buddhist communities know that the ultimate success of these communities lies in devotion to the teachings of the Buddha, how the community members understand and express that teaching, and how harmoniously the community lives while maintaining its Buddhist purpose. I was very impressed by the high level of sincerity and diligent devotion to Buddhist training which I saw during my stay. Like most people who first come to Zen, in the beginning of my training I found sesshin to be a very challenging experience. Over the years I have learned to appreciate and enjoy the challenge and dynamic intensity of meditation which sesshin creates, and I found myself during this sesshin both benefitting from and

appreciating the stillness of the Tassajara community as it balanced zazen with the dynamic activity needed to make sesshin a success. The abbess, the director, the temple officers, and the community members were very kind, welcoming, and helpful to those of us who were unfamiliar with the customs and etiquette of the community. They were also very compassionate and helpful to those of us who inevitably forgot to bring



something needed or did not know where to go or when to go there. Their graciousness and generosity were consistently present when we visitors felt compelled to ask inconvenient questions at the worst possible time.

One can discern much about the quality of training that goes on in a temple simply by observing the level of care which the residents give to their tasks, the "fabric" of the monastery, the grounds, and the accommodations for guests and residents. The residents quietly and meditatively go about their daily tasks. The placement of the buildings and other facilities and the way which they are used help maintain the idea of one community. Manifestly, the residents love and care for their grounds: they were clean and neat. Our accommodations were elegantly Spartan: our cottage was simple, comfortable yet not indulgent, and conducive to self-restraint and meditation. Although we had beautiful weather for sesshin, I would guess that it is not easy to live in those cottages during the winter and spring, yet some obviously do. One would need to live very simply with an attitude of faith and determination to make it a positive experience. These elements help to create a balanced opportunity which can aid a person in focusing on zazen and deepening Buddhist practice. Another thing that surprised and impressed me was to see the practice of meeting and bowing. Although this is a common practice in the East, it is not seen as much in this country; it was a real joy to see the residents, whenever they met each other, stop, make gassho and bow, then continue on their way, regardless of what they were doing. This is an excellent practice which helps to train the mind to relinquish what it clings to in the moment and learn to do walking zazen. The willingness to bow in this way goes a long way to remind us to make meditation the first priority in whatever we are doing at the moment, as well as to cultivate respect for others as the temple of Buddha Nature. As long as bowing lasts, Buddhism will last.

Sesshin schedule was traditionally challenging without becoming extreme. After rising at 3:45 a.m., we sat for two periods of zazen before the morning sutra recitation. Morning Service consisted of the traditional Soto Zen sutras, and also of one or two non-traditional recitations in English which I found to be very appropriate and inspiring. I confess to being somewhat sorry to let them go at sesshin's end. As I am used to chanting only in English, it was a welcome challenge to resurrect my rusty memory and poor recitation skills to daily chant the Hannyashingyo and the Daihishindharani in Japanese. I very much appreciated being given the opportunity to use a scripture book without being made to feel that I wasn't quite 'with it.' Morning Service was immediately followed by formal breakfast in the Zendo, and we ate all of our meals there. The ceremonial for meals outlined in Fukushuhampo and the serving of the meals was expertly done. It was no surprise that the food was excellent.

Rev. Abbess Zenkei Hartmann is a fine, energetic abbess and teacher who understands the proper balance and limits of compassionate discipline. Aside from her teish« on

the first day, she did not say too much to her community. But her example was excellent and she simply allowed the sesshin to develop according to the schedule she set. When she did speak, however, it was direct, relevant to the matter at hand, compassionate, and encouraging. I found her exhortations inspiring and they caused me to want to extend the effort I was trying to make even more. On one occasion, she made a pithy statement which has stayed with me until today: "With your whole body, your whole mind, your whole being, your whole essence, practice the Way of the Buddhas: this is the Wholehearted Way." Poignant, excellent teaching, indeed.

This is the first time I have ever attended a sesshin where there were multiple guest lecturers, seven in all. I enjoyed it. It was an excellent opportunity for each of us to recognize the teaching of "all is different" as each speaker made his or her presentation. Each teisho was uniquely different in its method of presentation, yet each successfully conveyed the teaching of "all is one." Each speaker uniquely expressed a unity of intention to practice zazen and train in the Buddhist Way. The study text for the sesshin, a translation by Rev. Shohaku Okumura of Dogen Zenji's Bendowa entitled "The Wholehearted Way," was investigated and expounded by seven different speakers in seven different ways. Thus the multi-faceted jewel of the Buddhist Dharma revealed itself and was expressed through the eyes, teaching, and behavior of each speaker. Even though we may have the wonderful opportunity to be able to study with an excellent teacher who expresses the Dharma in the way we find the most direct and helpful, this kind of teaching offers the valuable opportunity to hear the Dharma from a variety of women and men who come from different countries, backgrounds, and training experiences; each possesses a unique perspective on Buddhist training which can be helpful in myriad ways to a large group of practitioners. It helped me to appreciate the teaching of my own master more deeply, and also gave me a fresh perspective on various aspects of zazen and Buddhist practice which I had not contemplated before. There was ample opportunity to learn and I benefitted from it. As Dogen Zenji teaches, there are two ways to practice the Truth: one is to hear the teachings from a master; the other is to practice zazen. Correctly blended, this is good. Those of us who attended this sesshin had ample opportunity to learn from both of these ways.

As is usual during sesshin, we conversed only when necessary and spent the majority of our time in the Zendo. Since I arrived the day before sesshin started and had to depart the day it ended, I was unable to learn a lot about the work activities necessary for the survival and maintenance of the community. Yet I did feel that I was participating fully along with everyone else. I really enjoyed the daily practice of the "work circle." Accompanied by the ringing of the temple bell and the thunder of the drum for samu, the work circle formed to apportion tasks to clean, maintain, and aid the monastery. Such an everyday activity in Zen temples and monasteries, yet the purpose and harmony of the Buddhist Sangha expresses itself clearly when eighty people willingly meet to help each

other without the motive of personal gain or profit, doing that which needs to be done for the good of all in a quiet, serene, and harmonious way. What a wonderful lesson and model for today's world!

Our hosts organized the sesshin well and all the activities were well-accomplished. On the evening before sesshin began, we met for the traditional "Admonitions for Sesshin" which clearly indicated the purpose of our week-long retreat and clarified what each of us as individuals and as a group could do to create the attitude of mind and spirit to help make the sesshin a success for everyone. The temple bells, gongs, and drums were all sounded with mindfulness and precision; the protocol of Zen ceremonial was consistently well-done, as was the precenting for the sutra recitations. Before noon each day, we chanted a portion of "Bendowa" describing jiyu-zanmai, the self-fulfilling samadhi of the Buddhas. I had not studied Bendowa intensely prior to this sesshin for a number of years, and I found this particular passage to be memorable and enlivening. Our combined chanting of Dogen Zenji's teaching of jiyu-zanmai and our study and reading of Bendowa during sesshin really helped to deepen and broaden my gratitude and appreciation for this wonderful writing and for the opportunity we each have as human beings to practice the Way.

On the last day of sesshin, Rev. Zenkei and the community celebrated a memorial service at the outdoor shrine where both Revs. Roshi Suzuki and Katagiri's relics are enshrined. The shrine nestles in a quiet glade on the mountainside where one gets a beautiful view of the color of the mountains and the sound of the Tassajara Valley stream echoing in the distance. I was particularly moved by the abbess's generosity in dedicating the ceremony to all of the masters whose disciples were guest lecturers, including my

own master. As we poured water over the stupas of the Tassajara Founders, I reflected on the depth of gratitude which we, as the first native generation of Zen practitioners, feel for the priests and lay people who brought Zen Buddhism to this country and of the trials and tribulations we have all experienced in our attempt to practice the Wholehearted Way of the Buddhas and Ancestors. It was a fitting end to a serene, exhilarating, and joyful week.

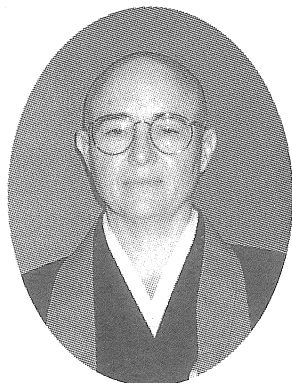
Unless one resides in a monastery or spends much time in a temple, one does not usually experience sesshin as an everyday, natural lifestyle or set of circumstances. It is too rigorous to be so. However, sesshin is a wonderful opportunity to set aside our involvements and the distractions of everyday life in order to focus intensely on zazen and Buddhist training. No matter how short and fleeting a week may seem, we have ample time to learn to live in, by, through, and from the mind of zazen. Although sitting sesshin can appear somewhat daunting, ascetic, or even grueling to some, the opportunity to 'just sit' for one week is a real treasure whose value cannot be discussed or ignored. I am deeply grateful to the abbess and community for the opportunity to sit sesshin at Tassajara. The community is unique and, due to its unique circumstances, fully capable of offering Zen Buddhism in its secluded, quiet, and picturesque environment, to a wide variety of people, many of whom would not ordinarily be interested in Buddhism. May the Tassajara community continue to make this offering to all who wish to share it for many, many years to come.

Rev. Eko Little is a disciple of the late Rev. Roshi Jiyu-Kennett. He was ordained by her into the Soto Zen tradition in 1971 and received Dharma Transmission and certification to teach from her. He is the abbot of Shasta Abbey.



Training in Japan

Jisho Warner



Rev. Jisho Warner,
Stone Creek Zendo

I entered Aichi Senmon Nisodo for the first time five years ago, in cherry blossom season. I took the shinkansen train from Tokyo, so filled with apprehension that I couldn't eat the *obento* train lunch. I had heard that the *nisodo*, the women's training monastery, was especially severe, even among Japanese training centers, which are famous for their hard regimens. Besides, my Japanese language skills

were pretty limited in spite of my efforts to study, and no one at the *nisodo* spoke English. Of course, if you are anxious there are always things to be anxious about.

The buildings of the *nisodo* are handsome, solid, deeply rooted structures in traditional temple style. They are closely set in a compound at the top of a hill in a prosperous residential section of Nagoya. When you enter the main gate, the path draws you in, past carefully tended small gardens.

Within a day of my arrival I was swept up in services and ceremonies and cleaning, trying to make sense of chants and forms I didn't know, among people I didn't know. Very gradually the faces and the schedule began to make sense. I was there for the spring *ango*, the intensive training period, as an *ichinensei*, a first-year trainee. In the strict hierarchy of the monastery, I was at the very bottom. The *ichinensei* are continually brought into line by everyone senior to them, which is difficult at times for anyone and particularly so for westerners, since ours is a less stratified world. Being at the bottom meant I was also at the end of the line, which had some advantages: I could always find my slippers in a hurry when everyone's identical black slippers were lined up together in a dark hallway, since mine were always the ones at the very end of the line. Although new entrants find *nisodo* ways stringent, life for everyone there is strict, traditional, and formal.

The *ryo*, the work group, is the unit of operations and of life in the training center. It operates closely and cooperatively. I was assigned to the *chiden-ryo*, the work group that takes care of the *hatto*, the hall where services and ceremonies take place. The *ryo* shared one room and, it seemed, one life, but it was immediately obvious that American ideas of "just following along" in the monastic practice were impossible. There was a great deal of work to do and everyone had different assignments daily and a lot to learn. Whatever I couldn't do, one of my *ryo* mates would have to do for me in addition to her own duties. That was a powerful motivator to manage my tasks and to comprehend what I was told. Once when I didn't understand how and when to pass on to the next *ryo* a wooden

marker designating a rotating assignment, my whole *ryo* got an extra turn at that job in addition to the new duty that had rotated our way.

Also, in such a tightly coordinated community, anything I flubbed was very visible very soon — and usually very embarrassing. There was the time I fell backward off the *shumidan*, the big main altar, while cleaning it, because I didn't realize that the steps up to it weren't attached. My bucket of water and I made quite a splash. There were the many times I was still chasing a pickle around my *oryoki*, my eating bowl, while everyone else was done. There were endless times I wasn't in the right place at the right time in the right clothes because I hadn't understood an instruction hours before. Those times were a trial to me and at those times I was a trial to everyone else.

The language and culture gap was unquestionably a heavy burden despite the good will on both sides. From morning to night the foreign trainee has to be ready to strain with every ounce of concentration she can muster to understand someone speaking, and to figure out and fit into foreign cultural patterns and manners. And my endlessly patient cohorts had to be equally ready to make themselves understood and to accept my not knowing their ways of doing things. The two seniors in my *ryo* were extremely kind to me. Lucky for me, but not mere chance, as Shundo Aoyama Roshi, the abbess, had carefully selected this work group. Over and over, slowly, using simple Japanese, they explained what I was to do next. They wrote things out for me in *hiragana*, since I read very little kanji. They never complained about the extra bother I was and instead they managed to enjoy life with me and to laugh together.

I was very impressed by the seriousness of the women trainees I had joined. They were mature and thoughtful women who had chosen this path not for any reward at the end of training but out of devotion to the buddha way. They had been out in the world as nurses, mothers, office managers, and kimono makers, and had turned their lives toward this path of service with a deep aspiration. The teachers were dedicated to the trainees, leading us in practice and preparing us for our lives as priests. Aoyama Roshi set the tone, completely serious in her expectations of wholehearted and capable performance, and endlessly energetic and supportive of the trainees' efforts. There was hardly a casual mote of dust to be found on the premises.

That *ango* was one of the harder experiences of my life, even though I had traveled and lived abroad before and had trained through many *ango* in America. It was also a valuable experience, particularly the chance to investigate with my own body and mind the *shugyo*, the rigorous practice that is the heart of the monastic training. Of course I absorbed a great many details about Japanese practice, services, and ceremonies, and I learned to change my robes in three minutes flat. But I also had my assumptions shaken up and met some lovely and dedicated people. I made what often felt like a supreme effort and found the response warm and accepting. And what a grand good-bye party they gave me!

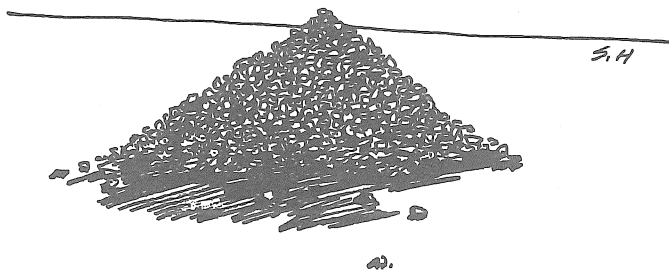
Four years later I went back for the fall *ango*. My Japanese

was a little better, and I knew the place I was coming to. On the way from Narita airport on the shinkansen my heart wasn't pounding and I had no trouble eating my obento. But I was very curious to see how both the nisodo and I had changed. And indeed, it was different for me this time. A few of the women I had trained with before were still there, now in more senior positions. They and the teachers surprised me by remembering me, and with kindness. Since it wasn't quite so new and strange, and I was no longer an ichinensei, I felt more woven into the fabric of the community. I knew its rhythms better and could fit myself in more smoothly. Again, they went out of their way for me, both to compensate for my bad knees and to teach me individually. I learned to be *doshi*, the officiant for morning service, and I was coached for *zuise*, the ceremony of homage and officiating at the Soto head temples.

This time I was able to understand the layers of meaning of nisodo training life a little more deeply, thanks largely to the efforts some of the longtime members of the community made to communicate their world to me. The role of the monastic shugyo discipline in the formation of the priest became clearer to me.

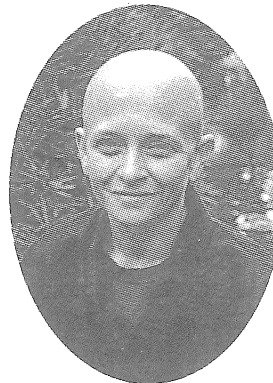
The humidity and heat of late-summer Nagoya gave way to fall storms and typhoons, the stately ginkgo outside turned yellow, and as it began to get chilly I had to leave to return to the small California zendo where I lead practice. This time, as I left I felt a tug of regret at leaving that ordered and communal life. But we agreed that I wasn't really leaving, just going off on a very extended break. I will go back once more, slipping into the flow of the nisodo training life again as smoothly as I can, knowing too that it will be different once again.

Rev. Jisho Warner is the resident priest at Stone Creek Zendo in Sebastopol, California. A disciple of Rev. Tozen Akiyama of the Milwaukee Zen Center, she trained in Minnesota under Dainin Katagiri Roshi and at Aichi Senmon Nisodo in Nagoya, Japan, under Shundo Aoyama Roshi.



Shogoji International Ango A novice experience

Rev. Myoshu Wren



Rev. Myoshu Wren
Kojin-an

I must thank my teacher, Rev. Gengo Akiba, for having the wisdom to send me to participate in the International Ango at Shogoji in Kyushu. Shogoji dates back over 650 years and the training goes back to Dogen Zenji. This was my first time living in a monastery and my first visit to Japan. Truly, I was a beginner! I had no idea what life in a monastery would be like, or what life would

be like in Japan. What I did know, was that the training followed Dogen Zenji's ancient ways, so it would be very intense. I was reluctant to go for such a long time because of my responsibilities at home. It was difficult to leave my routine, it took a year to arrange, and when the time came I was ill. Still, this was going to be my first experience of monastic life in the truest way. There was a rigorous schedule, no electricity (basic shelter), *Takuhatsu* and *Obon*.

We were a small group, so rotations were rapid and it was tiring for everyone. Out of nine monks attending, there were four Japanese, one Italian, two Brazilians and two Americans. The language barrier was greater than I'd expected. There was also great humidity, lots of mosquitoes and sleep loss. Several of the ceremonies, drums, *hans*, and bells were new practices for me. Sometimes the instructions came down to gestures and I think I missed several of the finer details of the duties. The duties were given to us for three days. The first day, you watch and try to understand what they are saying to you about the job. The second day, you perform the job with your teacher watching you, and the third day, you do it alone. It was truly a most frustrating thing when you knew you did not understand what they were saying to you, yet you were responsible. It took me about seven weeks to understand what it was I had to do. Our Ango lasted ten weeks. We all could have learned more and things would have run more smoothly if the language/communications had been less difficult. We did finally grow in sync. We became one organism - studying, chanting, working, and eating at the same time eating the same food and working as a group to break our ego.

When I think back over the whole *Ango*, I feel the experiences of *Takuhatsu* and *Obon* were the most valuable. These two events I probably will never do in America. There I was with the other eight monks. We were wearing our *koromos* and *kimonos* (shortened with a *yotai*, priest belt), *ajirogasas* (bamboo hats) on our heads, *kyahans* (white leggings), *tekkos* (white gloves that cover only the backs of our hands), and *waraji* (sandals) doing *Takuhastu*. It was extremely hot and humid, and I had blisters in between my toes and on my ankles from the straw sandals, yet we kept going from house to house, from merchant to merchant chanting "*Kan ze on na mu butsu yo butsu u in yo butsu u en bu po so en joraku ga jo cho nen kan ze on bo nen kan ze on nen nen ju shin ki nen nen fu ri shin*". *Takuhastu*, the ancient way of begging for food, is an incredible memory for me - one I will never forget. I enjoyed the very genuine experience of the effort of years gone by, how much it took to do *Takuhatsu* and how it felt going back to share with the others. For *Obon*, we would go to the village at the foot of the hill and enter the homes to pray for the spirits of the loved ones at the family altar. Everyone's house was open, whether they were home or not, and their altars were set up to honor their ancestors. There were pictures of the ancestors and the families told stories about them. Although I could not understand the details, I could feel their love. We would do three chants (about 10 - 20 minutes) and then the family would feed us. I was amazed by the absolutely complete participation of the community, the total openness. There is nothing in America to compare with this. I will never forget the great warmth we felt from these families.

I have returned with a new understanding of and a deeper respect for the many values of monastic life. I have already begun to perform my duties at *Kojin-An* with greater ceremony and I am sharing what I've learned with our *Sangha* members. *Gassho*, Everyone!

Myoshu Wren started her zen training in 1976 when she took her first martial arts class in Kent, Ohio. Her Isshinryu karate class always began and ended with ten minutes of zazen. All of the zen principles were introduced and zen koans were discussed and studied as part of her class. In 1989, Myoshu relocated to Oakland to open a new karate school. One of her students led her to Kojin-an Zendo in 1995. After meeting Rev. Gengo Akiba and receiving her lay-ordination, she became his disciple. A roku dan in Isshinryu Karate, she continues to teach zen to young children and adults through this art form.

My Zazen Sankyū

(san = to participate humbly; kyu=to inquire or explore)
Notebook (3)

Rev. Issho Fujita

with assistance from Tansetz Shibata

Fragmentary Thought X <“Means to Sweep” and “Wandering Here and There to Practice”>



Rev, Issho Fujita, Valley Zendo

Fukanzazengi ("The Way of Zazen Recommended to Everyone") of Dogen Zenji says "The Whole Being (= reality as a whole) is free from all dusts (= delusion). Why should we believe in the means to sweep them away? We are never separate from the great capital. Why should we wander here and there to practice." I think that this paragraph is presenting a criterion to distinguish zazen from *shamata/vipasyana* practices.

Let me translate this passage into a modern expression with what I believe Dogen Zenji meant. "Zazen far transcends all dusts (= defilement/delusion), because it is not a personal practice, but the practice of the whole universe (= whole being). Since we sit at the place which transcends relative differences such as purity vs. impurity, there is no need to rely on a gradual method (with levels, phases, steps and so on) to sweep and purify it. Zazen, as sat in the great capital where all the virtues are perfectly accomplished, is sufficiently fulfilled as it is at each moment and at each place. Therefore, there is no need to fix it with tricks, and there is no point in wandering here and there searching outside for something missing"

In other words, from the viewpoint of zazen, both *shamata* and *vipasyana* practices are just the 'means to sweep' and 'wandering here and there', and we should not apply them to zazen.

If we analyze my definition of meditation at the beginning of Fragmentary Thought IX, there are three elements in meditation: (1) one's present condition which is evaluated as not preferable; (2) one's future condition which is deemed preferable (= objective/purpose); (3) meditation practice to move oneself from (1) to (2) (= means).

According to what is written to explain the five contemplations in the "Encyclopedia of Buddhist Terminologies" by Gen Nakamura, there are numerous examples of meditation that have this structure: "contemplation of impurity" to rectify one's greed by contemplating impurities in the external world; "contemplation of loving/kindness and

compassion" to calm down one's anger by contemplating all sentient beings and the arising of one's loving/kindness and compassion; "contemplation of causal relationships" to rectify one's stupidity by contemplating that everything arises from causal relationships; "contemplation of various worlds" to rectify one's wrong understanding that things are substantial by contemplating the five aggregates and the eighteen realms; "contemplation of counting breaths" to calm one's agitated mind by counting breaths, and so on.

The phrase "means to sweep" originates from Shen-hsiu's following poem in the "Platform Sutra of Sixth Ancestral Teacher": "The body is the tree of enlightenment; the mind is like a bright mirror-stand. At all times we must strive to sweep it, and must not let the dust gather." Hung-jen, the Fifth Ancestral Teacher from Bodhidharma, for some reason, did not consent to Shen-hsiu who wrote this poem based on the traditional perspectives of shamata/vipasyana. Instead, Hui-neng, who was hulling rice, was transmitted the dharma and became the Sixth Ancestral Teacher. Hui-neng's following poem is written from a totally different dimension from Shen-hsiu's: "Originally enlightenment is not a tree. The bright mirror is not a stand. From the beginning, not a single thing exists; where, then, can a grain of dust collect?"

"If we are not mindful, dusts tend to accumulate in our minds. This is not good. Let us clean dusts using certain methods and keep our minds always clean." – this is very logical and understandable. However, the anecdote of Shen-hsiu and Hui-neng is telling us that this is not about zazen correctly transmitted from Bodhidharma. What is the problem?

Although I think that studying this from various perspectives is possible, let me point out one thing here. It depends on whether or not the practice has a personal intention/fabrication. The intention/fabrication here is, simply put, an effort to somehow create one's desired condition based on the calculation "if such and such is done, this will follow." So, no matter how lofty one's aim would be, this kind of practice is doomed by personal intention to move toward the direction which is desirable for oneself. This intention/fabrication is called 'zenna' (= contamination; stains). The practice of zenna is merely a personal technique based on self-power, therefore, the mind cannot help caring about ideas (= thoughts wishing to move out from (1) to (2)) and choices (= selections to pick (2) which is good and which is trash (1) and what is not good) based on self-centered judgments. No matter how sophisticated a technique/method it would be, for pure and spotless zazen, it is a mere "side event" trying to capture something as a practitioner's personal possession. Kodo Sawaki Roshi said, "You are thinking that you, only egocentric you, would like to attain enlightenment and peace of mind. Dharma does not exist just for you!"

For Dogen Zenji who declared that "The Buddhas and ancestral teachers have been preserving practice-realization, that is, fuzenna (= spotlessness; unstainedness; the antonym of zenna)" in "Senjo (Washing)" of Shobogenzo, it cannot be called the practice of dharma as long as it has zenna, regardless

of how eagerly practiced. I think that the fundamental difference between zazen and so-called meditation lies here. In order to practice zazen correctly, close and deep study of fuzenna "which has been preserved by the Buddhas and ancestral teachers" is essential.

A passage in "Yuibutsuyobutsu (Only Buddha and Buddha)" of Shobogenzo serves as our reference. "To be unstained does not mean that you try forcefully to exclude intention or discrimination, or that you establish a state of non-intention. Being unstained cannot be intended or discriminated at all." In other words, fuzenna cannot be the result of intentional activities striving for or making up the state of non-intention or no selection, nor is it something attainable through completely absorbing oneself into sitting aiming at fuzenna. In "Shoji (Birth and Death)" of Shobogenzo, Dogen Zenji described this attitude as "Just set aside your body and mind, forget about them, and throw them into the house of Buddha; then all is done by Buddha and we just follow this path." When we are like this, "as one is not disturbed by one's perception and consciousness (= outside of one's perception and consciousness)" ("Bendowa - On Endeavoring the Way"), "you are free from birth and death and become a Buddha without effort or calculation." ("Shoji - Birth and Death" of Shobogenzo).

We all should be aware that, to capture zazen as elusive as this in the context of intention/selection, which is easy to understand through common sense, is by no means possible, and zazen should not be discussed as one of the meditations within such a context as intention/selection. Dogen Zenji himself declared that "Zazen is not the dharma of the three worlds, but the dharma of the Buddhas and ancestral teachers."

Fragmentary Thought XI <Vipassana Practice and Zazen>

Right After I finished writing Fragmentary Thoughts IX and Xs which are about shamata/vipasyana practices and the genealogy of Shikan-Taza, I received an article titled "Concrete Method of Practicing the Way in Dogen Zenji – an essay based on the hypothesis that Shikan-Taza inherited the Theravada samatha/vipassana tradition" (Soto Zen Research Bulletin Vol.27) from its author, Rev. Hodo Hatano. The fact that there is a person who shares my view that the genealogy of Shikan-Taza should be studied, encouraged me greatly. Taking this opportunity, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to him.

Let me also reemphasize here that my fragmented thoughts are just personal opinions by a non-researcher who has no academic training in Buddhist studies and has few literary reference at hand to support such studies.

Rev. Hatano is trying to connect Shikan-Taza to vipassana practice in Theravada Buddhism by saying in his article, "Since there is a limitation in traditional Zen just practicing samadhi, vipassana practice as observation to understand impermanence should be added. That is (real) 'non-thinking' and Shikan-Taza." He is thinking that, by doing so, he may be able to clarify Shikan-Taza, which has been left ambiguous, idealistic, and abstract. His letter attached says that he intends to proceed with his research in this direction based on the

Mahasatipattanasutta, which is the basic text of vipassana practice. I am looking forward to learning the results of his further research.

I myself have participated in a 10-day course of vipassana practice at the large center nearby and studied commentaries on Mahasatipattanasutta, but my conclusion is that zazen differs from vipassana in its philosophy on which its practice is based. (Let me reemphasize here that it is not a matter of which practice is superior in terms of values.) Therefore, my opinion is different from that of Rev. Hatano.

Although there may be some overlaps with what I wrote so far, let me raise several points which can serve as issues of discussion.

<1> Zazen is not meditation/contemplation but Shoshin-Tanza (sitting in correct posture; sitting upright).

There, not only the body but the mind is also engaged in Shoshin-Tanza simultaneously (= "At the time of zazen, the body-mind is that of zazen."). Although the mind is not engaged in a particular contemplation practice, it functions in a certain unique manner. If we pick up only this part, we might be able to say that zazen has an element which seems like vipassana. However, that is just a part of zazen, not its entirety.

Rev. Hatano described the concrete way of practicing vipassana – based on the "rising" and "falling" continuously in our minds as the belly expands and contracts as we breathe (labeling), label things happening one by one and moment by moment such as "itchy", "sluggish", "painful", "sleepy", "hearing", "seeing", and so on.

The 10-day course of vipassana practice I attended devoted the first three days to training one's sensitivity to sensations of the body by focusing on sensations around the nose (practice called anapanasati). The rest of the seven days were devoted to observing the internal state of the body continuously by scanning from head to foot and vice versa, like a searchlight, with attention to the sensation training of the first three days.

Both labeling and scanning practice are done by "consciousness", and its activities are the heart of their practice. So, although there was an instruction to stretch the back, it was simply because it is a convenient posture for engaging in this work. As far as a person can continue his or her observation practice for an extended period of time without moving the body, contrary to zazen, instructions on maintaining an upright posture is not so much fussed over. I had difficulty in maintaining my sitting posture, maybe because my mind was too busy with this work. When I used my mind consciously then someplace in my body tended to get tense. If I get accustomed to this practice, it may get easier. During these ten days, while physical pains did not bother me particularly, I felt the mental fatigue of this practice which is very different from that of zazen during sesshin. This is maybe due to the fact that I used my mind in a manner different from zazen, because using seldom-used muscles causes pains in the body. While asleep, I had various interesting dreams. This might be the result of my brain being stimulated by this practice in a unique manner. My opinion that vipassana practice and

zazen are two different practices comes from these different "tastes" I personally experienced rather than theoretical differences in their approaches.

<2> Zazen does not consist of psychological manipulation techniques/methods "I" implement consciously/actively to attain a certain objective.

Zazen should have no room for such zenna to creep in. Kosho Uchiyama Roshi says clearly in his book "Opening the Hand of Thought" (published by Penguin) that "To practice zazen is to leave everything thoroughly and continuously to this correct posture of zazen." That is to say, zazen is to set aside all activities driven by human desires, leave everything to the posture of non-intention and non-fabrication. In Shobogenzo-Zuimonki Dogen states, "To sit is, namely, non-fabrication." ordinary "human" activities are done in zazen, therefore, it is also called the practice of Buddha. There the self just exists as the self practiced and experienced by zazen, as the self as it is.

The following passage in Genjokoan of Shobogenzo – "Driving ourselves to practice and experiencing the myriad things is delusion. When the myriad things actively practice and experience ourselves, that is the state of realization." — can also be taken as a description of this nature of zazen.

I think that both labeling and scanning practices are active efforts in which self-consciousness as "I" engages. If I borrow grammatical terms, they are more like transitive verbs (the structure requires a subject doing something to an object). On the contrary, in zazen, the consciousness is clearly awake and seeing the whole zazen (metaphoric expression), yet it does not pick up something intentionally to pay special attention to nor engage in intentional activities such as organized observations. To the extent that the whole is being the whole as it is - here and now, as we hear, as we see, as our body feels, as our thoughts float in our mind — we can say that zazen is more like an intransitive verb (the structure subject describes its function by itself without reference to object). "Jijuyu Zanmai (self-fullfilling samdhi)" and Sawaki Roshi's phrase that "self is doing self by itself" points out these natures of zazen. In short, zazen is "being", not "doing".

If the practice of vipassana gets deepened, ultimately it might be possible to reach a unified condition that has no discrimination between subject and object, and the perception of conscious effort drops off. However, I cannot say anything definite yet as to whether it is possible to attain it only by training the mind without going through Shoshin-Tanza.

<3> Genealogy of zazen in relation to vipassana

I am also thinking that Shikan-Taza may have certain connections with vipassana practice, but probably the connections between the two are not simply continuous ones, and there must be a quantum leap of a kind in its quality (such as vipassana practice overcomes its own structure). How should we see this?

<4> "Self-completeness" and autonomy

The tradition of Pure Land Buddhism, as it was transmitted

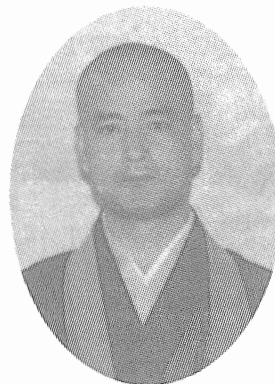
into Japan, was transformed fundamentally by Honen and Shinran, and chanting the name of Amida Buddha emerged with totally different meanings. I do believe that this incident has utmost importance for all the people who are practicing Buddhism. My present hypothesis is that there must be a "transformation" of the same magnitude that happened in the tradition of meditation and shamata/vipasyana that transformed it into zazen.

As one goes back to the Primal Vow of Pure Land Buddhism by throwing sundry practices away, chanting the name of Amida Buddha emerges as "great practice". It is not chanting to go from here (= this world) to there (= Pure Land) in the future, but chanting as a proof of the fact that the Pure Land has come and is already here with us. Benefits of religious faith such as "non-retrogression in the present life", and "grasp and never abandon" lie within religious faith itself. They are not outcomes of accumulated religious faith, nor the results that one can obtain in an exchange of religious faith. This is the reason why the one can rest peacefully in "just chanting". Zazen also has the same kind of structure — [zazen is autonomous and self-completed within. It has no future, it rests peacefully in the present, and the benefits of zazen lie within zazen itself. For this reason, we can "just sit". "Practice and realization" does not mean realization after a series of practices, but is a phrase describing the fact that the practice itself is already in the state of realization. Can this be said of vipassana practice?

Let me stop here after raising these four issues of discussion. I think that, to let the originality of zazen stand out, comparison to vipassana practice is very useful. I intend to continue my study on this issue.

DOGEN ZENJI'S GENJO-KOAN LECTURE (4)

By Rev. Shohaku Okumura
Soto Zen Education Center



Rev. Shohaku Okumura,
Soto Zen Education Center

Text

(4) Those who greatly realize delusion are buddhas; those who are greatly deluded in realization are living beings.

"Those who greatly realize delusion are Buddhas." No matter how hard we practice we still find even the motivation of practice can be a bit selfish in favor of one's self. We need to realize that we are still selfish

even in our practice. Dogen Zenji said that those are buddhas. If we really see our selfishness, we have to make repentance and work to be free from selfishness. The power that enable us to see our selfishness is Buddha. Practice which allow us to awaken to our selfishness and letting go is Buddha. We need to awake to the reality that we are deeply deluded with self-centeredness and that we lose sight of egolessness.

"And those who are greatly deluded in realization are living beings." Buddhas and living beings are not two separate groups of people. Both are within the way we live. In this sense there is no separation between Buddhas and living beings. This is the meaning of "no Buddhas and no living beings" in the second sentence of Genjo-koan. Our practice is buddha because we are living within reality as the reality in which there is no separation between self and others. From that side, we are actually Buddhas. We are living as the universal reality of life whether we know it or not. There is no separation between self and others even though "we" make the separation with our minds. No matter how selfish idea we have in our minds, we are always living together within the network of interdependent origination in which we are all connected and supported by all beings in the whole world.

From the other side, even though we are living out the reality with all living beings, we are still selfish. We often lose sight of reality. These two basic contradicting aspects of our actual lives are the source of energy which makes us practice zazen and study Buddha Dharma. In our practice of zazen, we let go of our ego-centeredness and are one with the total interpenetrating reality that is buddha nature. In a sense, our delusion enables us to practice. So, our delusion is a very important part of our practice.

We cannot see the absolute reality as an object of our discriminating minds. But when we let go of our relative, self-centered way of viewing things, we are naturally a part of Absolute Reality. Because if absolute reality excludes

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relativity, it is relative with relativity and not truly Absolute. Within absolute reality we cannot be the subject as an observer. We need to be a part of the total movement of absolute reality. We cannot take an absolute position as an individual. We take a certain position within the total reality. We have a point of view as a karmic self. We have to see the world from inside and ourselves as part of the world. This condition of our life as an individual, relative and karmic self makes us delusive.

Though we are deluded as individuals we are still living within the absolute reality that is Buddha Dharma. Even though we are living within the absolute universal reality, we are still deluded as individual karmic selves. This is actually the reality of human life. In other words, we are deluded within realization and we realize the delusion in our practice. And the subject that practices dharma is not this individual karmic self, but the universal reality is itself practicing as the manifestation of Reality itself. This transformation of the subject of practice is essential to understand Dogen Zenji's teaching in Genjo-koan.

(Text) Further more, there are those who attain realization beyond realization and those who are deluded within delusion. There are some people who realize Reality within practice and who go beyond. There are some people who are deluded within delusion. Within the relation between self and all things (banpo) there are numberless conditions as the scenery of our lives.

(5)
(text) When Buddhas are truly Buddhas they don't need to perceive they are themselves Buddhas, however, they are enlightened Buddhas and they continue actualizing Buddha. In seeing color with body and mind, and hearing sounds with body and mind, although we perceive them intimately, it is not like reflections in a mirror or the moon in water. When one side is illuminated, the other side is dark.

“When Buddhas are truly Buddhas”, that means, when we are actually living as a part of interpenetrating reality, we cannot see that we are really living out the absolute reality. Because when we are living it, there is no separation between ourselves and reality as subject and object, self and all beings. The conditions in the world create the persons and persons create the conditions of the world. The world and people are working together as one total reality. We cannot see “self” as subject and the world as object. There is no way to judge whether the situation is good or bad or the person is good or bad on this basis of “total reality”.

However, as an individual living within the total reality, we take the position of subject and view and judge objects. We always make judgments and make choice to take a certain action within a certain condition of the world. There is good and bad and we must choose good and avoid bad. Within Absolute Reality, we create a copy of reality using our minds. That is like a map or Atlas of the earth. An atlas is a likeness

of the earth. But it is not possible to make a perfect Atlas. The earth has three dimensions and the sheet of paper on which the atlas is made has only two; some part of it is distorted: size, shape or direction. In some world Atlas, Greenland is bigger than North America.

In the same way, we create a picture of the world that is not a perfect copy of the reality. Within our map of the world, there are things we think good, useful, valuable; and other things which we think bad, useless, valueless in the same way that we see flowers and weeds. And usually we take for granted that the picture of the world created in our minds is the world itself; and we think “my” system of values is right and others’ system of values is distorted. This is the basic delusion. This basic delusion or ignorance causes many problems when we encounter people who have a different system of values based on a different picture of the world.

When philosophers in the Yogacara School—one of the major Mahayana Schools in India—say that everything is only consciousness, I think they refer to the reality of this human condition.

In our zazen practice, we open our hand of thought and let go of the map created in our minds and sit down on the ground of the earth of reality. Within our thinking, we only see a distorted copy of the world, but by letting go, we understand that the picture of the world created by our minds, based on karmic experiences is not the real “reality”. We don’t simply trust it but inquire further, as Dogen Zenji says later in section ten of Genjo-koan.

Our zazen is not a method to correct the distortion of the map. We just let go of our map and sit down on the earth of reality. And by letting go, we don’t trust (rely on) our thoughts. Letting go is, on one hand, complete negation of any thought created by our minds based on our limited karmic experiences; and on the other hand, letting go of thought is acceptance of any thoughts as the secretion of our minds and as the incomplete map of the world. We just let them come up and go away. We neither negate anything nor affirm anything. And by studying dharma (reality or truth in a broader sense, not limited to that recorded in “Buddhist” teachings), we can continuously correct our distortions. In our Zazen we can do this because we are simply sitting facing the wall without any association with other people. In our daily lives in the society, we cannot do this. We need to base our thinking on our incomplete map of the world and make choices. In order to make choices we need to distinguish good and bad, positive from negative. But when we understand that our picture of the world and our system of values are incomplete and that, somehow, they may be distorted or one-sided, we can be flexible enough to listen to others’ opinions which can be distorted in a different way; but, by doing this, our way of viewing things becomes broadened and we can work together with others. This is how letting go of thought in our zazen works in our daily lives.

When we practice in this way, there is no way to conceive that I am a buddha or that I am enlightened. There is no way we can judge ourselves because there is no separation between subject and objects. We just keep trying to deepen ourselves into this immeasurable reality.

When we sit facing the wall in our zazen, there is no separation of subjects and objects, still so many things come up in our minds. We often start to think of something and interact with the thought as an object. But, in our zazen it is easy to see that thought is illusion because there is only a wall in front of us. And when we let go, the thought and our judgment disappear and only the wall remains. This is an important point in our practice of zazen. This is dropping off body and mind. And yet, thought comes back the next moment. We just continue to let go of whatever comes up.

When those thoughts, judgments or evaluations arose, then there is separation between subject and object. When subject and object are really one, there is no one to set "value". Only the reality as it is manifests itself, and this includes our delusions. When we sit in the upright posture, keep our eyes open, breathe through the nose and let go of thoughts, reality manifests itself. This is Genjo-koan (Manifestation of Reality).

Zazen is itself the reality. In zazen we don't grasp at anything; we don't engage in anything. We are just as we are. That's all. We just sit without doing anything. This is the practice of shikantaza. There is no way to judge if this zazen I sit today is good and that zazen I sat yesterday was bad. Whether our mind is busy or calm, in whatever condition, we just keep letting go of whatever comes up on our mind. There is no good or bad zazen. Zazen is always zazen.

An important point in our zazen practice is to keep the same posture toward whatever conditions present themselves, without being pulled by either good conditions or difficult conditions. We keep our upright posture. If we cling to some favorable conditions in our zazen and try to avoid difficult conditions, we create samsara in our zazen practice. Sometimes we are successful and happy and sometimes we are not successful and feel miserable. And since any conditions stay forever we start to transmigrate within samsara in our zazen practice. Then our zazen is not Buddha's practice. As Dogen Zenji said in Fukanzazengi, our zazen practice is "the Dharma-gate of peace and joy (nirvana)" and is itself realization. Reality manifests itself in practice.

Dogen Zenji says that Buddhas do not conceive themselves as Buddhas when they are truly Buddhas, and yet he also says that they are enlightened Buddhas and they continue actualizing Buddha. Reality is beyond judgment as to whether we are Buddhas or not. We cannot judge this. Still, this life in which individuality and universality are there at the same time is the reality of our life. This reality is itself Buddha constantly manifesting Buddha. Continually awakening to this

life is Buddha. We cannot say we as an individual are Buddhas or "I have become a Buddha as an individual," but when we put ourselves on the ground of reality and let go of individuality, our practice manifests Buddha. We are living beings animated by all beings.

We are living within Buddha's life, and yet, we are deluded and create samsara and we suffer. This is, according to Uchiyama Roshi, the scenery of life. We need to accept it and work with it.

(text) In seeing color with body and mind, and hearing sounds with body and mind, although we perceive them intimately, it is not like reflections in a mirror or the moon in water. When one side is illuminated, the other side is dark.

Dogen Zenji is discussing enlightenment and delusion on the basis of the relationship between self and all things. We (self) are not outside all beings (myriad dharmas). Self is a part of all beings. We are living together with all things within the network of interdependent origination. There is no self separate from all things.

This is the basic reality of our life, but we usually don't see it. We create our own picture of the world based on our limited experiences in our lives. To see our picture of the world as real reality is delusion. Our view is that we are the center of the world and that we are most important. We further think that we are the subject and all things are objects and we can use all things as a resource for our satisfaction, to make us happy, powerful, wealthy and famous.

As Buddha's life, we are really connected with all things and we are supported by all things. We are one with all things in the entire universe. This reality is enlightenment. Enlightenment is not something we can grasp as "my possession" or something that we can experience within certain conditions and because of such an experience we can say "I am an enlightened person". If we judge our experience and say "I have an enlightenment experience", such "I" is already separate from all things.

What we can do is to just keep practicing and manifesting the universal reality without judgment or evaluation. This means doing things without selfish desire even for enlightenment. This is very difficult. Even when we try to help others, we still find ego-centered motivation in the depth of our minds.

Even in our practice of zazen, when we see ourselves deeply, we will find some selfish motivation. Even when we try to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of others, there still is something that develops to satisfy the self by sacrificing the self. We are so complicated. It is not possible to simply judge whether we are ego-centered or not in our actions; and yet, as Buddha's children, we try to help others, we try to be free from selfishness. As our Bodhisattva vow, we try to do it and

yet, there is no time we can say to ourselves, "Now I am completely free from selfish desires". All the same, in each moment and each situation we try to let go of our selfish desires and try to be helpful to all beings.

We just keep opening our hands of thought; keep going on with our practice. As Dogen Zenji says, our practice is endless. There is no time when we can say, "Now I have gotten the license of 'Enlightened Person'".

From the one side, we are always living within the enlightenment of Buddhas, but from the other side, no matter how hard or how long we practice in this life time, we are still limited individuals. This reality is truly wondrous. We always have both the possibility to act with egolessness and egocentricity. Both Buddha and demon live in ourselves. We have always the possibility to make mistakes. Our life should be lived moment by moment led by vow and repentance.

What Dogen Zenji is saying by using the analogy of self and all things is that self and all things are not two separate things like a mirror and its reflection, or like a reflection of the moon in water. Dogen Zenji uses these two analogies of moon-water, mirror-object in two different ways in Genjokoan. Here he is saying that mirror and object are two separate things. Usually when we see things, we think we are like a mirror. When there is an object in front of us, the object is reflected on our eyes. But he says our life is not like that. He says, "We see color with our whole body and mind." We don't see things using only our eyes. Our whole body and mind see things, hear sounds, smell fragrance, taste flavor, feel stimulation, etc. And there is no separation between a person seeing and things seen. Both are truly one reality. There is no separation between self and objects.

I lived in Massachusetts from 1975 to 1981, working to establish a small Zen community with two of my dharma brothers. We bought about six acres of land in a wooded area in western Massachusetts. We didn't even have water in the beginning. We first built a small house in which we sat, slept, cooked and did everything. Since we had no financial support from anyone, we had to support ourselves by working for someone. A few years after we started to live there, we got a part time job at a tofu shop. There were some pieces of tofu which were too small to sell. We could get them free, so we ate tofu almost everyday. Tofu was our main source of protein. One day I went to a natural food shop with a person who practiced with us. In that store we found a poster saying, "We are what we eat". When we saw the poster I said, "If that is so, we are tofu!"

I think it is true that we are what we eat.

When this sentence is used on a poster at a natural food shop, it means that depending on whether what we eat is wholesome or not, we become healthy or not healthy; so we should eat more natural foods rather than the foods that tempt us. Later I found that this sentence was originally written by

German philosopher, Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach (1804–72), who was a materialist. When a materialist says that we are what we eat, I think this sentence might be a criticism against Christianity. The Bible says we exist not by bread alone, we live because we depend on the word of God. I think Feuerbach wanted to say that we alive because of foods, not because of the words of God. We are what we eat means we are material, in this case bread.

When I think of this expression, "We are what we eat", in terms of Buddhist teachings, this sentence has really a deep meaning. Here is a glass of water. Water is not me as a matter of course. But, wondrous enough, through my action of drinking, the water becomes me. When I breathe, air becomes me. We are what we eat, what we drink, what we breathe, what we hear, what we smell, what we taste, what we see. There is no me beside those things. Through interaction with things we are really connected with things and things become us. We are all the things we experience. Without this relationship with all things we cannot exist for even one moment. Or in reality, "we" don't exist but only the relationship and interaction are there.

As human beings we need to live in a community and even the way we think, judge others using words and concepts is a gift from the community or the culture in which we were born and educated. We are created by community and the world and we create the conditions of society and influence the world. The world and this self are really one thing.

When we function as a part of this network of all things, or universal life, our life is healthy, wholesome; but somehow we can also be like a cancer in our body. I think cancer is a paradoxical thing. Cancer is a part of a body but it does not follow the order of the body. Cancer grows of its own accord and when it grows to a certain extent, the body dies; and when the body dies, the cancer dies. I think human civilization, created by human desires for happiness and prosperity, can be like cancer in nature. Human beings are part of nature but somehow we started to grow of our own accord; we have rather been trying to control nature using things to satisfy our desires. We have killed numberless living beings. We have destroyed a huge part of nature to build cities and call it development. We think human beings are the owners of nature. We have grown very quickly and with much struggle and effort to make this world better for us. At least, until I became a teenager, the basic message from my education at my school and from Japanese society was, "We are making the world better by using scientific knowledge and technology."

But later we found that science and technology used by our desires for our satisfaction caused a lot of problems, killed numberless living beings, and destroyed large part of nature. And finally we began to understand, like cancer in our body, when nature dies we also die. This is because we and nature are one entire life. This is the reality of interdependent

origination. This is what the Buddha taught.

I think our way of viewing things is upside-down. We think we are most important within this world; that this world is our possession. But, actually, we are a very small part of nature. What we should do is to turn it over and see the right position of ourselves in nature. This is what Buddha taught as right view in the Eight-Fold Noble Path. This is the way we can live together with all beings.

This is what Dogen Zenji shows us in Genjo-koan. When we convey ourselves toward all things and try to control them, we are deluded. When all things come toward us and, together with us, carry our practice / realization, the subject of this practice is not this person, myself, but all things carry out this practice/realization through this person's body and mind. This is the meaning of dropping off body and mind. This is not my personal activity to improve my self but the whole universe practices as the universal life through my body and mind and we are enabled to settle down peacefully within this network of interdependent origination.

In the case of Dogen Zenji's teachings, our zazen practice is the pivotal point of this change to turn our way of viewing things. Because our way of viewing things is upside-down, we need to turn it over; then it becomes natural and wholesome. That's all. This is all about our practice. This is very simple and yet endless.

Dogen Zenji says, "When one side is illuminated the other side is dark." This means that we are living as a part of all things. We can call this the reality which includes self and all things as "self (*jiko*)", or we can call it "all things (*banpo*)". We can name the reality either way because when we say "self" all things are included, and when we say "all things" the self is included. This one total reality is seen from two sides in Buddhism, reality as a collection of numberless individual things, and also one universal reality without any separation or individuality. We are at the same time individual and universal.

When we see the reality as a whole we see the self is the whole world because we are connected with all things. Or we can say there is no such thing called the self. Either is a possible expression of the entire reality. When we say the self, all things are included. When we say all things, the self is included. When we say the self, "all beings" is in the dark side and they do not appear. When we say "all things", the self is in the dark and it does not appear. When the self is illuminated, all things are in the dark; and when all things are illuminated, the self is in the dark. This is the way Dogen Zenji expresses this wondrous reality of interdependent origination.

NEWS

FROM THE SOTO ZEN ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE AND EDUCATION CENTER

The Soto Zen Education Center will move from Los Angeles to San Francisco in July, 1999. The office will be located at Sokoji Soto Mission.

The address is 1691 Laguna Street, San Francisco, CA 94115.

The late Bishop Kenko Yamashita's one year memorial service was held at Zenshuji in Los Angeles on March 7, 1999.

Many guests from Japan and various parts of the U.S. came to the service. The 1999 General Meeting of the Association of Soto Zen Buddhists was held on March 6 at Zenshuji.

SOTO ZEN EDUCATION CENTER ACTIVITY SCHEDULE *May to December, 1999*

DHARMA STUDY GROUP

*On Sundays - May 16, June 6, July 18, August 1, September 12,
October 10, November 28, December 12*

8:30 am Zazen, 9:10 am Morning Service,
9:30 am Work Period, 10:00 am Lecture

(Nov. 28 and Dec. 12 study groups will offer a lecture on at 11:00 am)

Led by Rev. Shohaku Okumura in English at Sokoji,
San Francisco, CA.

Text: Shobogenzo: Buddha Nature

For more information call Sokoji: (415) 346-7540

LECTURE SERIES ON BUDDHISM

At Sokoji Temple, San Francisco, CA

For more information call Sokoji: (415) 346-7540

On Fridays - May 7, June 4, July 9, August 6

6:30 pm Zazen, 7:10 pm Lecture

(Jul. 9 lecturer to be determined and lecture will be after
the Obon Service at 11:00 am.)

Led by Bishop Gengo Akiba in Japanese

On Fridays - September 10, October 1, November 5, December 3

6:30 pm Zazen, 7:10 pm Lecture

Led by Rev. Taigen Daien Leighton in English

Text: Lotus Sutra

SESSHIN

June 11 - 18, 1999 (Gathering of Soto Zen Sangha)

At Hokyoji Zen Monastery in New Albin, Iowa

For more information call Minnesota Zen Meditation Center
(612) 822-5313

December 1 - 7 (Rohatsu Sesshin)

At Milwaukee Zen Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

For more information call Milwaukee Zen Center (414) 963-0526