

*Zazen Wasan,
Song
of
Zazen
by
Hakuin Zenji
with
commentary
by
Shodo Harada Roshi*

Tahoma Zen Monastery

One Drop Zen

2017

Chapters

Hakuin and His Song of Zazen	1
The juniper tree in the front garden	21
Every day is a good day	27
Mu	31
The Song of Zazen - Zazen Wasan	36
The Six Paramitas	92
Generosity	93
Virtue	95
Patience	101
Diligence, effort	102
Samadhi	104
Wisdom	105
Index	109

Calligraphy

The juniper tree in the front garden	21
Every day is a good day	27
Mu	31
Straightforward mind is the place of practice	71
See your true self and realize Buddha nature	89
The Original True Face	90

Zazen Wasan

All sentient beings are essentially Buddhas.	36
As with water and ice, there is no ice without water;	36
apart from sentient beings, there are no Buddhas.	37
Not knowing how close the truth is, we seek it far away—what a pity!	38
We are like one who in the midst of water cries out desperately in thirst.	39
We are like the son of a rich man who wandered away among the poor.	40
The reason we transmigrate through the Six Realms is	
because we are lost in the darkness of ignorance.	43
Going further and further astray in the darkness,	
how can we ever be free from birth-and-death?	45
As for the Mahayana practice of zazen,	
there are no words to praise it fully.	46
The Six Paramitas, such as giving, maintaining the precepts,	47
and various other good deeds like invoking the Buddha's name,	48
repentance,	50
and spiritual training, all finally return to the practice of zazen.	54
Even those who have sat zazen only once will see all karma erased.	60
Nowhere will they find evil paths,	
and the Pure Land will not be far away.	61
If we listen even once with open heart to this truth,	
then praise it and gladly embrace it, how much more so then,	63
if on reflecting within ourselves we directly realize Self-nature,	
giving proof to the truth that Self-nature is no-nature.	64
We will have gone far beyond idle speculation.	67
The gate of the oneness of cause and effect is thereby opened,	
and not-two, not-three, straight ahead runs the Way.	70
Realizing the form of no-form as form,	
whether going or returning we cannot be any place else.	74
Realizing the thought of no-thought as thought,	
whether singing or dancing, we are the voice of the Dharma.	77
How vast and wide the unobstructed sky of samadhi!	81
How bright and clear the perfect moonlight of the Fourfold Wisdom!	81
At this moment what more need we seek?	84
As the eternal tranquillity of Truth reveals itself to us,	
this very place is the Land of Lotuses and	
this very body is the body of the Buddha.	87

Hakuin and His Song of Zazen

For those of us who make zazen our primary practice, the words of Hakuin Zenji in the Song of Zazen are of great importance. They are an excellent guide for understanding the actual essence of doing zazen. Before we look at the Song of Zazen itself, however, I would like to tell you about Hakuin Zenji. This will help you to understand. Hakuin Zenji is one of the greatest figures of Japanese Buddhism. Today, the Zen Masters who transmit the Dharma in the Rinzai line are all descendants of Hakuin Zenji. The lines of Zen that flowed from the Kamakura and Motomachi eras down to today all joined in Hakuin Zen to become Japanese Zen. Although Hakuin Zenji has also been criticized in various writings, his enormous influence continues to the modern era. As one ancient put it: "There are two things of Suruga that are great beyond anything else, the great mountain of Fuji and Hakuin of Hara." The people thought of Hakuin in this way even when he was alive; he was famous and well loved and deeply respected.

For information about Hakuin's life, we have the records of Torei Enji, one of his top disciples. We know that Hakuin Zenji was born in 1685 in Shizuoka Prefecture in Numazu at Hara, at the base of Mount Fuji. At the age of four, he was already expressing great brilliance and genius. At the age of seven, he heard a Dharma talk on the Lotus Sutra

at a temple and memorized the entire sutra by heart. At the age of eleven, he was taken by his mother to a talk at a temple where he heard about the terrifying horrors of hell for the first time. He was so deeply frightened that he began shaking and trembling. Perhaps more than most children, he was very sensitive and nervous. He wept and grabbed at his mother's knees, weeping and crying. "Hell is too scary! Hell is so scary! Even when I have you nearby, hell is so scary! If I fall into hell it will be terrible! Please make it so that I do not have to fall into hell!" He was a child very affected by things. At the age of twelve, he heard a monk say, "Even if in fire, it won't burn, even if in water, it won't drown." Hearing this, he made a vow and gathered his own mind to realize this state of mind. He imitated the monk by taking a fire tong that was heated to red-hot and touching it to his calf, to try to see if he, too, could do this without being burned. This is how dedicated he was.

It has been said that Hakuin was a man who lived his life while he kept an eye on hell. As a young man, he carried his fear of hell with him, and it was perhaps as a result of that fear that he yearned to be ordained. At the age of fifteen, overcoming his parents' reluctance to his being ordained, he became a monk with their permission. He was ordained at Shoinji in Hara by Tanrei Soden. This priest ordained and supported him

and gave him the name Ekaku. When Hakuin was seventeen, Tanrei died; under another teacher, at the age of nineteen, he began actual training.

One day, when reading the records of the old Chinese masters, Hakuin found the account of Ganto Zenkatsu, a famous Zen master who lived during the Tang dynasty. When Hakuin read that Ganto had been killed by bandits who cut off his head, he was stopped short. His deep fear of hell had sent him into training. He had become ordained to be liberated from that great fear, and now he learned that a great master who had already completed his training had been slain by thieves! He had been sure that a person who did such training would have enough merit to change evil thieves into good and faithful people—that there should be enough Dharma power in a man like Ganto to accomplish something like that. Was Ganto no different from an ordinary person in society? Hakuin thought that if Ganto's death was in spite of all that training, then the training must have no meaning whatsoever.

Just as huge as his hope and expectation had been, so was his disappointment and discouragement. "Everything was the bragging left by the old masters—nothing more—fantastic stories with nothing real in them." With these thoughts his training lost its vitality. He had no motivation and he suffered. For many months, he would not sit or study. He wrote poems and read books, doing whatever he felt like. Still, he

remained unsettled. His mind was insecure, hopeless, and tired; every day he was in deep despair. What had that all been about? For what had he been training? How should he live now? He could find no answers.

One sunny day at the temple where he was living, the monks were airing the old books to rid them of bugs that might destroy them. Facing all the books sitting there, Hakuin made a vow and put his future in the hands of the gods: "Please tell me in which direction I should go!" he prayed. "Please, I promise that I will follow whatever you tell me to do!" From the bottom of his heart, Hakuin Zenji made this deep commitment. Then, from the pile of books spread all over the room, he took one in his hands and opened it.

The book he happened to pick up was by Jimyo Insui. In the old days, this splendid teacher, Jimyo, told about going to the temple of Funyo Zensho Zenji. Funyo Zenji was a very, very strict and outlandish teacher who would not let just anyone come into his temple to train. If you became even the slightest bit drowsy, Funyo would beat you and tell you that you had to leave. So, as Jimyo sat outside Funyo's temple hoping for admittance, doing his full and taut zazen, he held an awl just above his leg so that if he started to fall asleep the point of the awl on his leg would awaken him. He worked diligently and creatively on his practice. People of old always said, "Great efforts will, without exception, bring great Realization. To be alive in this world

without any reason or result—to live and yet be known by no one—for what are we born into this world if this is how it is?” Jimyo kept himself going with these thoughts, making extreme efforts with intensity, and he was finally allowed to enter Funyo Zenji’s dojo. In later years, the Dharma of that same Funyo Zenji, of whom all people and beings were frightened, was transmitted to Jimyo. Hakuin, reading about this, thought that if you do not believe deeply enough in the Buddhadharmā—even if you think about why these people did what they did for training—it must be because you have not done enough yet, and he corrected his thinking. Over and over again he would say to himself, “Great efforts bring great Realization.” Again and again and again he gathered his courage and once more began training.

At the age of twenty, having decided how the rest of his life would be lived, Hakuin Zenji traveled to the east and to the west looking for teachers and places to train. At a temple in the Banshu area he wrote this poem:

The mountain’s flowing waters
surge forth the
Buddha’s sermon endlessly.
If you would practice in the
same way that these rivers
flow,
before long you will without
fail realize kensho.

He did zazen at this temple, which was located at the top of a mountain.

From the mountain, he could hear the flowing waters of a river in the valley below him. Listening all night to the sounds of the river as it ceaselessly made its way to the sea, he knew that if a person made a firm commitment and deep vow to practice in this same unceasing manner, if a person could continue in this way without stopping, then that person’s realization was guaranteed. One would awaken to the True Mind without mistake. He then trained with no books or brushes or calligraphies or pictures or inkstones—none of it at all. He pursued his path with total determination.

In the spring of his twenty-fourth year, Hakuin was at Eiganji Temple in Takata, in the Echigo area. At this time his training was well advanced and his state of mind had ripened to the place of no inside or outside—to where it could not be known what was himself and what was Mu. He was truly still and clear—truly serene. His was the state of mind of the mute person who has seen a dream and cannot express it, that of sitting without knowing you are sitting and standing without knowing you are standing, of speaking without even knowing you are speaking—the world had become like one smooth layer of Muji, completely closed into this one layer. This was that moment just before one’s own purified mind extends throughout the heavens and earth. People of old said that great efforts will without fail produce great light! Hakuin vowed deeply in his mind and began a sesshin sitting in the graveyard. He began his sitting

determined not to stand again until he had attained enlightenment. He continued intensely with this determination and entered a great samadhi. At dawn on the last day of this sesshin, from far away in the dim light of the dawn, he heard the sound of the temple bell. At that moment Hakuin Ekaku Zenji jumped up and cried out, “That ringing! That ringing! That is me ringing! That is me ringing!”

His still and clear mind had been pierced through by the bell’s sound, and that and every moment was full of deep wonder. Great joy filled every movement of his hands and feet. Hakuin expressed it jubilantly: “Ganto has never died! He is here, right here. Alive, just like this!”

He had struggled for so long and had endured so much, and finally all of those efforts were coming to fruition. He felt that no one had had such a deep experience for at least three hundred years. He was in such deep wonder that he became very excited. And when he saw people everywhere suffering, he was moved to tears that the Buddhadharma had come to this earth to help them. He was deeply, deeply moved. Yet the priest of Eiganji, Shotetsu, could not do anything with him. Hakuin had fallen into a severe case of conceited self-importance. This Hakuin Zenji, if he had stopped there, would never have become as famous throughout the world as he is today. The great functioning that he expressed in his life would never have been possible.

The person who was responsible for bringing about this turnaround was Dokyo Etan Zenji, familiarly known as Shojū Rojin. The person who encouraged Hakuin to see and speak with Shojū Rojin was Doju Sokaku, his only disciple.

When Hakuin arrived at Shojū Rojin’s hermitage, the teacher questioned him immediately, “How did you see Muji?”

“Muji! There is no place to lay a hand on it.”

Shojū Rojin immediately took Hakuin’s nose in his hand and twisted it, saying, “You say it can’t be touched, but this is how much it can be touched!” He became furious with Hakuin, and Hakuin saw the extent of his conceit and dropped it immediately in front of Shojū Rojin. He became like a baby with him. Next, Shojū Rojin asked him how he had seen the koan of “Where did Nansen go when he died?” [Entangling Vines, case 272] “How about it: Where did he go?”

No matter what Hakuin answered, Shojū Rojin would not accept it. One time Shojū Rojin grabbed him and hit him and almost threw him off the porch—this was how strong and energetic he was. He yelled at Hakuin, “You stupid priest—stuck in the dark hole and blind besides!” Hakuin had experienced that Mind of the Great Death, but from there he was unable to function; he was stuck and fixed. With that reborn consciousness and way of being, he was deeply troubled.

Whenever he encountered Shoju Rojin, Shoju Rojin would call him “that Ekaku Joza who is stuck in a deep dark hole.” It is written that Shoju Rojin would hit him and pull him around. Yet Hakuin Zenji stayed with Shoju Rojin and trained at his hermitage for eight months.

One day Hakuin was doing takuhatsu in the town of Iiyama. Still working on the koan about where Nansen had gone when he died, Hakuin was standing in front of a house steeped deeply in samadhi when an old lady came out of the house and told him to go to the other side of the street. Because he was in deep samadhi, he did not hear her. The old lady became very angry. “If you don’t get over there across the street, I will hit you with my broom!” She began hitting him, and he suddenly came to and spontaneously encountered his true Life Source—that actual Truth was touched. Koans that he could not have touched before he could now pass one right after the next. He saw them all in one flash. He was so full of joy, he returned to see Shoju Rojin. When Shoju Rojin saw how Hakuin looked, he confirmed his experience completely.

But while Shoju Rojin confirmed Hakuin’s experience, he did not confirm his understanding. Leaving Shoju Rojin’s hermitage, Hakuin returned to Numazu to nurse his former teacher. While there he continued to deepen his practice, but his body was so tired and exhausted from his great efforts that he became depressed and sick with

tuberculosis. He became so sick that even the most famous traditional doctors of the time gave up all hope of saving him. He then went to visit a hermit, Hakuyu, who lived in the deep hills near Shirakawa in Kyoto. From this hermit he was able to learn the hermit’s method of staying healthy and healing—the naikan, the healing practice of introspection. With this method his sickness was cured. He saw that it might be easy for any person of practice to have this same kind of experience, to lose the meaning of practice, to become conceptual, and so he wrote a book, *Yasenkana*, in the common language that would be easy for anyone to read and understand.

After the age of twenty-eight Hakuin continued to deepen his understanding by going on pilgrimages to meet the great masters in Fukui, Aichi, Mino, and elsewhere. Here and there he looked for the masters and did his inventive practice, steeped in samadhi wherever he was. At thirty-two, he finally returned to the temple where he had been ordained, Shoinji. He taught the many disciples who came to him and worked in society a little bit at a time, giving life to his experiences through Dharma talks. At the age of forty-two, he once again took in hand the Lotus Sutra, which he had not looked at for such a long time. As he read the section entitled “The Chapter of Examples,” he coincidentally heard the sound of a cricket crying weakly underneath the porch and was suddenly awakened to the deepest truth of the Lotus Sutra. At the age

of sixteen he had thrown down this sutra, declaring it simpleminded; now, twenty-six years later, he was finally able to realize its truth.

In his diary he described how, without even thinking about it, he had given a great cry of joy and astonishment. He must have been deeply moved. Until then he had thought this sutra was a shallow work without much meaning, and he had taught people in this way. He realized now that he must apologize from the roots of his being for having done this. At this time, also for the first time, he understood what a great state of mind Shoju Rojin lived in every single day of his life.

Shakyamuni Sesson, the Buddha, had not deceived people after all! This he also understood: In Buddhism there is only one straight path—this fundamental truth of the Mahayana he now understood clearly. He was now able to live the Buddhadharma freely. As the Buddha had put it, “Everywhere in these three worlds is my home and all of its beings are my children.” This great compassion of the Buddha was absorbed more and more deeply into his being. He knew without doubt that all beings are from the origin Buddhas, and that all of these Buddhas have come into this world to open the eye of wisdom in all beings—to open and enlighten this eye of wisdom. In all of its subtlety, he saw that there is nothing but this in the Buddhadharma. The exemplary teachings in the Lotus Sutra were to illustrate this and teach how to do it, like a mother trying somehow to get

her child to be able to understand. In teaching how to understand the mind of humans, this sutra expresses the compassionate mind and wisdom of the parent who first chews the food in order that the child will be able to eat it. Hakuin realized this great kindness he had not understood before, that great determination of the Buddha to liberate all beings, to leave out not even a single one. The immensity of this all-embracing, compassionate mind was what he could then also feel, and in his deep and intense amazement he could not hold back his overflowing tears. At the beginning, when he had heard about being in fire without being burned and being in water without being drowned, looking for dreamy miracles, he had become ordained. But now he knew that that which he had finally realized, that great, all-embracing compassion of the Buddha, was his very own life energy as well.

In the Lotus Sutra it is written, “I do not have any feeling against you, nor deride you. You are one who will become a Buddha.” In this way it is said to both old and young people, to both rich and poor people: prostrate and realize this vow. Shakyamuni’s mind is expressed in this teaching clearly. For those of us who do zazen, it is in the realizing of this that we are able to be rid of our own heaviness. To awaken to this, we let go of the layers of accumulation and realize the essence. This is what our zazen teaches us. For all beings to be liberated it is required that all beings be awakened to this very fact.

From that time on, Hakuin Zenji worked with truly sharp intensity. In his fifties and sixties, never resting and not needing to regret the passing of a single wasted moment, he taught the many disciples who came to him, spoke wherever he was invited, did calligraphy, painted, and wrote, leaving simple texts and dynamically working in every direction.

At the age of seventy-nine he was a little sick, yet he never rested. On New Year's Day in the year 1768, he said, "I will this year be eighty-three—an old monk—but I have never had such a wonderful New Year's. It is so wonderful and I give great thanks!"

That year—in December of 1768—he was sick and was visited by the local doctor. The doctor took his pulse and concluded that there was nothing to be concerned with. Hakuin said to the doctor, "If you cannot recognize that a man is going to be dead in three days you must really be a blind quack!" On the tenth of December, Hakuin called his disciple Suio and told him how he wanted things to be done from then on. On the morning of the eleventh of December, quietly laying on his side, Hakuin gave a great growling sound and died. Six years later he was given the posthumous name of Jinki Zumyo Zenji, and following that he was also given the name Shoju Kokushi.

Hakuin Zenji's Song of Zazen begins, "All sentient beings are essentially Buddhas." Religion is the seeking of the eternal, the perfect, the pure, and the absolute good. To put it another

way, we can say that it is the seeking of God or Buddha. Is this God or Buddha inside us or outside us? We leave that question for now, since there are different ways of looking at this depending on the fundamental point of view of various religions and practices. Yet all religions seek this eternal purity and perfection. There is no difference in this. This is why religion is necessary—because we are not perfect and pure and because our life is not eternal. Because we are incomplete we seek something in God or Buddha to complete this imperfect, small self.

In the records of Buddhism we read that the Buddha at his birth immediately stood and walked seven and one-half steps. Pointing his right hand to the sky and his left hand to the earth, he said, "In all the heavens and on earth only One is holy." This may be only a legend, but it holds the flavor of Buddhism in a kernel. It tells us that our own mind is our place of refuge. His walking seven and one-half steps is about the freedom and rights of humans as they walk on the earth. He did not say "In all the heavens and on earth only One is holy" in order to say how superior he was. He was not saying it to call everyone but himself a fool. As the representative of all humans he was saying that the human being is the most splendid of all creations of heaven and earth. He was saying that humans are free. There is nothing that can deprive us of our true freedom and actual rights. If we return to our Original Mind we will always know that place of absolute dignity and

profound meaning. In each being there is this true clear mind. In Buddhism—in its basic teaching—we have this point made clearly: Humans are free and dignified. This wisdom and deep compassion are encompassed by each one of us, and this absolute freedom cannot be denied. If we think of it in this way, we can see how this legend of the birth of the Buddha has deep meaning for the teaching of Buddhism.

The Buddha was born a prince. He was versed in all the philosophies and schools of learning taught in India at that time. In the martial arts, he was able to throw off all challengers. He had a summer palace and a winter palace—and autumn and spring palaces as well. He was this rich and this full of blessings, and not missing anything in his pleasant life. So why, then, did he leave his beautiful wife and adorable child?

He left his deeply respected father, against his father's wishes. He gave up all of his possessions and political power and left his countrymen. Why? He had seen how meaningless material and animal pleasures are, and he had seen that no matter how we try, it is impossible to fully and completely satisfy the urge for them. He had understood this melancholy state of mind thoroughly. He went to the mountains to find true eternal life and meaning, to know true joy. He sought the answers there to his questions and a resolution to the unfulfilled path he had been walking. He was taking on the greatest problems of all beings and making a

determined commitment to resolve them. Someone had to do it, or the truth would never be realized.

For six years he continued his ascetic training. At the age of thirty-five, on the eighth of December, near the bank of the Nirenzen River, near Bodhgaya, he glanced at the morning star and was suddenly and deeply awakened to the Supreme Truth. At that moment, without even thinking of it, he said, "How wondrous! How wondrous! All beings, without exception, are endowed from the origin with the same bright, clear mind to which I have just been awakened!" That is to say, there is in the deep mind of each person a clear, pure, and eternal state. This true place is what he was enlightened to. It is not external to us. This was the first declaration, since the beginning of humans, of the true liberation of all beings.

In his Song of Zazen, Hakuin Zenji is telling of this great wisdom—this compassionate wisdom that we all have from the origin. This resolution is expressed in the first line: "All sentient beings are essentially Buddhas." Beginning with this conclusion he commences his Song. He puts that most basic teaching of Buddhism in his first line, teaching us about zazen. By putting the conclusion first, he shows us the basic tenet of Buddhism that relates to all beings: Why, when we are born into this world, do we suffer and become deluded and confused? The answer is expressed in the next lines. Many ways of liberating ourselves

from delusion are spoken of, but the Mahayana teaching is the most important. In accordance with the teaching of samadhi as the way of utmost importance, we are able to encounter that true quality of our Original Mind, and finally, “this very body is the body of the Buddha” is known clearly. This is the overall flow of this Song of Zazen.

Even though it says in the very first line that “All sentient beings are essentially Buddhas,” we are all born with both a very thick egoistic layer as well as the clear mind of Buddha. Yet the next line tells us that this egoistic layer and this clear, purified mind of Buddha are in fact the very same thing. We may perceive them as separate, but they are in fact only two sides of the whole: “As with water and ice, there is no ice without water; apart from sentient beings, there are no Buddhas.” An old song says that rain, snow, ice, and hail are no different from water; when they fall they all become the same water of the valley’s stream. Water becomes rain, becomes snow, becomes sleet, becomes hail, becomes ice, becomes frost. The form changes, but the source material is one and the same. Ice and water are of the same material and essence, but they are completely different in shape. Water is warm; ice is cold. Water has no form; ice has a form. Water flows; ice cannot flow. Water seeps into any place and leaves no cracks between itself and its container; ice cannot blend or accommodate. Water can bring life to trees and plants; ice harms trees and plants and kills fish. Water and ice

are of the same material, yet because their form is different they function differently. They are very different, yet they are in essence the same. In this same way, Buddhas and ignorant beings are different yet also the same.

The water that gives life can also be destructive. Sometimes there are great floods, and in these great floods homes and precious belongings are destroyed. A piece of ice is hard and resistant, yet if you heat it, or if it is touched by the warmth of the sun, it melts and turns to water. “As with water and ice, there is no ice without water.” As there is no ice apart from this water, our chunk of being egoistic is also part of our clear Buddha Nature. Even that mind which is concerned all day long with winning and losing and gaining and profiting, even that mind, just as it is, is the mind of the Buddha. There is nothing separate or different from that.

For ice to become water, heat must be applied. For human beings to return to the Original Mind, they have to throw away everything and offer themselves to society; they must let go of all delusive and extraneous thoughts. The only question that actually exists is: Do we have the wisdom to make use of that mind? We learn to prosper, to bring ourselves what we need, to take care of ourselves, but do we have the wisdom to work not only for our own good but also for the good of all beings, of all people in society, of everyone in the world? This wisdom knows that our greatest joy is the growth and prospering of all people, not for the

good of our own selves but because when everyone grows, everyone flourishes, and we flourish as well.

Yet if we are not careful, that small egoistic view immediately pops up again. And we are once more caught up in our own self-centered concerns, once again we are working only for our own comfort, taking care only of our own small, limited, narrow needs. Because we are not satisfied with this way of being, we look outside ourselves—we read books, we go to hear somebody talk, and we think about things external to ourselves instead of looking within. We look everywhere outside ourselves seeking some explanation, some reason, some excuse. “Not knowing how close the truth is, we seek it far away—what a pity!”

Usually, those people who enter the path of Zen have already read too many books and have done too much thinking about Zen. They want somehow to actualize all of the complicated explanations and all of the words they have picked up from those books. What they are attempting to do is truly a difficult thing. In fact, for zazen—which literally means “sitting Zen”—it is better not to read so much but simply to sit, as the word implies. What sits is not our mind but our body—that is the base.

In the olden days people would study and then, to understand what those studies did not reach, they would do zazen. To do zazen is to realize that place study does not reach, the true

realization that cannot be experienced through scholarship. What is the actual source point of every human’s nature—the original body of the universe?

We deal with this deep and vast question through zazen because it cannot be understood with our heads. That which can be explained can be found in books. This path, however, has to be experienced. Although there are many books about Zen, it is better to keep our heads empty. We need to let go of all knowledge or information and awaken to that with which we are already endowed at birth—this is zazen. What has to be done is not to learn something but to awaken to something—this is zazen. We have to let go of intellectual studies, of any idea of how much we already know, of how many books we have read; then we have to just sit. To deeply awaken to that Original Mind is what we do in zazen. That which is the base of doing this is our body. That is why it is necessary to correctly align our body and to awaken to our clear pure nature and the natural wisdom that springs forth from within us. The natural sense of how things truly are will become clear to us from within. From the bottom up we have to look once more at everything and see life as a whole, not in small separated parts. This is Zen. The body is always the base. The actuality of this is what we have to align—this is zazen.

If we speak about zazen in this way, people will assume they understand right away and think that it is enough just to sit, that all the teachings in the

world are beside the point, that we must not be entangled in confusing words. To just sit and think nothing—we imagine what this is, and think we should turn our backs on society and go into the mountains and do this and only this. If we choose not to go to the mountains, we still do the same thing by trying to maintain silence in our mind. We mistakenly think that this is zazen. And this kind of thinking is a very common mistake. If we were to just sit and separate ourselves from everything, would we be resolving our challenges, would we be bringing forth our true and correct inner wisdom?

Can we learn to read what is in nature, to let nature teach us its wisdom? Can we truly find that wisdom within ourselves? We are all full of ideas and thoughts and information and past experiences and dualism, yet our internal essence separated from all that is the True Source of everything. By returning to that mind, we can learn true wisdom from those true ways of thinking and seeing. As long as we are caught by our own narrow point of view and our attachments, we cannot see with this true wisdom. Even if we have the true teachings of the ancients, we can see and learn only from our own small self-centered point of view. We have to let go of our thoughts completely and read the clear wisdom of the ancients and learn from them. The Buddha was the first great teacher who realized this true wisdom, but many other great saints have realized this during the twenty-five hundred years since. We take Zen, handed down from

them, as our place of refuge. Through Zen we look for truth and see things correctly—for doing this, before anything else, we learn the teachings of the Buddha.

These teachings of the Buddha—this same wisdom transmitted by the many teachers who have passed the Dharma teaching down from one generation to the next—have guided many people on the path. The Buddha's first great teaching was that life is suffering. We must see this directly. Everyone likes to be happy. Yet even while living in happiness we must not let go of the truth of life: that there is great suffering everywhere. To see the source of this suffering is what is of the next greatest importance. Next, we have to look at this suffering correctly; if we do this we will, without fail, be liberated from such suffering. We are taught to believe deeply that each one of us can be liberated and then live as an awakened person. For this we enter the path and thoroughly clarify it to its ultimate point—this is how liberation works. This is how the Buddha taught his disciples. This teaching can be found in the Flower Garland Sutra or the Lotus Sutra, earlier sutras in which these teachings are frequently repeated. The words of the Buddha, as we look at them quietly and carefully, sentence by sentence, need to be realized not with our heads but within our daily lives. If we give them life and practice, then our minds will be freed from their delusion and confusion.

We become simple and clear, and from within ourselves our minds become liberated. This process is one of understanding not with our heads but with our bodies. We need to do it in our daily lives; whether we are sitting, standing, or walking, we need to keep doing it as if in one straight line. When we can hold just one word—looking at it and concentrating on it all the time—the clutter in our minds will be swept away naturally, and our minds will become truly vast and luminous. Our Bodhisattva vow to awaken everyone to this truth will become full, and our desires will no longer catch us in attachment.

The Buddha's disciple Shuri Hanroku is an example of this. He was a very foolish person, not very intelligent at all. The Buddha said to him, "Get rid of the clutter, sweep your mind clean," and Shuri Hanroku actually took up a broom and a rag and cleaned all day, every day, to keep this process ongoing. He then had an exemplary awakening to that deep wisdom no different from the awakening of the Buddha. Without any scholastic ability, and even with a terrible memory, if we do that which we have received as teaching with every ounce of our being, every bit of the time, our mind will of its own become liberated. This is very mysterious, it has to be said.

The words spoken by the Buddha feel very far away as the days and centuries go by, and we need more intimate and familiar words to guide us. Zen is taught within the living air

of every era; it must function in a way that is alive, vivid, and full of essence. From China there is the famous Mu koan of Joshu. Other koan lines are the answer to the question of why Bodhidharma came to China, "The oak tree in the garden," or Master Unmon's answer, "Every day is a good day."

These short phrases became themes and questions to be understood—not by using your head but by sitting quietly and concentrating only on this until, without even knowing it, these words become your state of mind, a state of mind that is no different from that of Joshu or Unmon. These koans are united in all people of training and touch the true source of each person's mind. What is important is to sit and concentrate on one thing until you become that state of mind of no thinking. Then everything you have learned externally—knowledge, past experiences, dualistic awareness—will fade away. You will separate from them and return to that state of mind in which you were born, and the original true wisdom will come forth. Your mind will shine, vast and luminous, with this wisdom's light. You will be able to experience life from a place free of attachments and see it clearly, exactly as it is.

To be able correctly and truly to see with this eye of wisdom is the most important thing, and that is what we are given the ability to understand. This way of seeing allows us to give to all people an acceptance of life just as it is. This state of mind of acceptance

is what is naturally born from this seeing.

We have to separate ourselves from our ego filter and the idea of self on which we are stuck. It is true that there is also the small “I” that lives, but we cannot function from the essential way of being and the true way of seeing when we are stuck and attached and unclear. The small self is always obstructive to the higher quality way of doing things. Those who find the higher way of doing things are the ones who do Zen and work hard to let go of their small selves. People who do kendo and are obstructed by their small selves are unable to know their opponent’s mind. If they cannot see the other’s mind, their movements become small and limited; they cannot move in a large and free-flowing way. For those who do flower arranging, if the arrangement is full of their own small-minded concepts, then the flowers will be full of a sense of self-importance, and there will not be any true harmony. In tea ceremony as well, if you present tea with dualistic ideas coming first, then the tea will not be served freely and without the stain of small-mindedness. There is no smooth flow to it, and while it is perhaps harmonious in form, it is not harmony from the deep heart. In the Noh theater or in calligraphy or in archery, zazen is given life in this same way. After we have learned the technique we can go beyond it and separate from it, becoming one with the entire universe. In this way, we can give life to a magnanimous functioning.

Likewise, in martial arts, we cannot be always stuck on winning and losing; we have to crush that attachment, and for doing that we have zazen. The sixth successor in the Dharma from Bodhidharma was Rokuso Eno, who said of zazen, “To not allow any mind moments of concern with what is happening outside of us, this is za. To look within and not be moved at all is zen.” This is his definition of zazen. Our awareness can move inward and then also outward. To be where there is no concern with any of the phenomena in the world—good and bad, beautiful and ugly, deluded or enlightened, sin or salvation, gain or loss—is za. To look within to where the awareness arises and to see its essence, and in seeing this to awaken to the source of this awareness—not being deluded by anything or moved around—is zen. This is the sixth patriarch’s very practical way of putting it. In fact, zazen, or za, is not to sit and say we cannot think, that we should not think. Rather, za is the place where we have lost track of all of this. Zen is not saying, “You cannot let that mind move, you should not move your mind around to this and that!” It is not struggling like that. But when your mind is well aligned, it does not go wandering around. This mind that does not stray from the Original Nature—this is Zen. This is how the sixth patriarch defined it.

We sit and become clear, free of obstructive thoughts and fear. This is the very important essence of Zen, but it does not mean that we should become like a rock or a tree. We must not make this mistake. “Never

abiding in any place yet manifesting continually.” When the sixth patriarch heard these words from the Diamond Sutra, he became deeply enlightened. We cannot say that the mind is empty and then try to guard that state of conceptualized emptiness. True emptiness does not arise from a preconceived notion of nothing at all. It is what comes forth when the mind holds on to nothing, when in each moment and in each situation we can function freely. Yet we do not move and change independently and individually; we do not act pointlessly and without meaning. That is very important. We have to look at nature: It never tries to prove and push itself; only humans do this. Nature is just as it is, changing in accordance with the seasons. In springtime, the flowers blossom; in the summer, the leaves become full and green, and the trees make fruit; and in the fall the leaves return to the ground to begin the preparation for the next year’s cycle. Animals as well live in accord with nature, not as if one being is more important than another. This is true for all beings in existence; nature always moves toward the newer, greater existence.

Life should not be regarded in the narrow sense of birth and death. Rather, we must know the bountiful flow of the life energy of the whole universe. This is the way nature is. Only humans hold on to attachments, and we sink into likes and dislikes. These are very high levels of emotion, but there is a difference between holding them important and drowning in them. When we

drown in them everything becomes suffering. Instead, we must live every single day anew, every day fresh again. In each second every new moment is born anew. Confidently and firmly living each moment—this is the human’s natural way of being. When laughing, laugh from your deepest heart; when crying, cry from your deepest heart; when it is necessary to be angry, be angry from your deepest heart; and in this way you can fill the heavens and the earth with the essence of what you are feeling and then leave nothing behind. With a full and abundant mind we live in this original state of mind, in the way of the healthy mind. To experience this essence is *zazen*. This place of no attachment, this free state of mind, is *zazen*.

Experiencing the Original Mind directly and teaching others to do so as well—that is what the lineage of Bodhidharma is guided by. We have his guiding words: “To see the clear mind directly and become a Buddha.” There are other ways of teaching it, but this is the direct way. By directly perceiving that mind which holds on to nothing whatsoever, immediately and at this very moment, each and every person can awaken.

Kyogen Chikan Zenji died in 898. In his younger years, Kyogen Zenji trained with Hyakujo Ekai Zenji. When Hyakujo Zenji died, Kyogen continued *sanzen* with his older brother disciple, Isan Reiyu. When he was in *sanzen*, the priest said to him, “When you were with Hyakujo Zenji, it was said that when given one you

would answer with ten. You have a reputation for being very clever, and you are said to have read everything that has been written on Zen. Still, I am not interested in hearing what you have read or learned or heard from someone else. What is it that you knew before you came out of your mother's womb? Before you knew any words—say one word of this!" This was a very tough problem! Kyogen certainly tried very hard and said many things.

"Mu."

Isan replied, "But that is what Joshu said."

"Form does not differ from emptiness."

Isan responded, "But that is what is written in the Heart Sutra."

"From the origin there is only one bit of emptiness."

"But that was already said by the sixth patriarch."

No matter what Kyogen said, Isan Reiyu told him that it was all someone else's words. That face before you were born—prior to any experience and learned knowledge—what is that? Speak it from yourself. So Kyogen reread everything and all of his notes on everything as well. Still, Isan would not accept anything he offered, only calling his answers the fart gas of the ancients—no matter what Kyogen tried it all got him nowhere. When finally he had nothing else to say, Kyogen pleaded with Isan to show some compassion and tell him the answer. But Isan just

laughed and said, "I want to tell you, but then it will be with my words. You have to speak your own answer with your own words."

Kyogen had studied so hard, and now he could not speak even a single word. How pitiful! It had all come to nothing. He felt he had no potential and would never be able to go back to society, so he decided to go and take care of the cleaning of a cemetery and not to show his face to anyone. The successor of the sixth patriarch, Echu Kokushi, was buried in a secluded place in the mountains, and this is where Kyogen went.

Kyogen spent his days cleaning that cemetery on the mountain. Still, in his mind, there remained the question Isan had asked him: Give one word from before you came out of your mother's womb. These words never left him; all day long they rolled around inside him. He became desperate in his contemplation. One day, when he went to the bamboo grove to throw away the leaves he had raked, as he did every day, a piece of tile hidden among the leaves hit the bamboo and made a loud clunk! On hearing that sound Kyogen was deeply enlightened. "This is it! This sound! I did not hear it from anyone, nor did I read it in a book! This sound is what was received by that self before I was born—that is it!" He felt it directly, so joyfully it came up from the very bottom of his mind. He looked far into the distance, in the direction where Isan was,

and lit incense and said: “Isan, great priest! You did well to chide me so thoroughly! If you had not kept me going like this, I would never have tasted this flavor today.” Kyogen had been able to go beyond that place of preconceived notions and ideas, forgetting time completely, forgetting even his own existence, and from there he heard that sound, clunk! At that point his consciousness was directly perceived as well, that which came from nowhere at all; in this pure awareness was his face before his parents were even born, his True Self. To say it another way, it was life as it is, not the physical body, but that life energy which fills the heavens and the earth—this is what he experienced. This is enlightenment, satori, and when we know this experience, the things we see every day are fresh, and each day our mind is new.

What we have to do is to separate ourselves from that dualistic awareness and knowledge that we have accumulated since birth, to go beyond that and to cut through its root completely. We have to realize our True Nature without giving any attention to those thoughts and deluded ideas. When we have encountered Original Mind, then we know that place of the Great Death and can return to true life. Then we realize true rebirth for the first time, and with that we can realize true life. In Zen we do not compliment and flatter and build someone up. In Zen we teach the student to do what has to be done.

So many people still read books and

learn explanations that say to look at this koan this way or that way. That is all reasoning and dualistic knowledge and information. That is not Zen. We have to reach the limit of words and do zazen to find true understanding. No matter what we say, we do not reach the true essence until there is nothing left to say; only when we have reached that place can we do zazen with our life on the line in one straight line. Then we work on one koan with everything we are, completely and totally. Without even noticing it, we lose track of our bodies, and we lose track of any sense of the zendo as well; everything around us fades away. From morning until night, there is truly only the koan that we have been given. And then, as we dig in deeper, even the koan disappears. All that is left is the breath, and finally that disappears as well. This is the place of slashing through the great root—when there is no self left at all. We enter that state of mind where we are totally transparent. With no heaviness and nothing left to hold on to, we become like a clear mirror, like a crystal palace.

This state of mind comes forth of itself. It has to be entered once, and from there we die completely. But this is not the final point. That full, ripened, and taut state is touched by something, and we burst forth—unable to stop laughing and knowing that the sentient beings are numberless and vowing that great Bodhisattva vow to save all of them.

When Kyogen heard the sound of the tile on the bamboo it was not taught

to him by his teacher or by his parents or by a book—it was his own mind. He knew that essence for himself. How can it be expressed to others? We do not know. The state of mind that cannot be explained comes from a place of no thoughts or ideas—just that clunk; the source of that which is unnameable—so we call it Buddha Nature.

When we are separated from all of our thoughts, this is Original Mind, and because we cannot explain it, we call it “Mu.” From that state of mind of Mu, that sound of clunk jumped forth. There is no beautiful or ugly there. Nor is there a fixed world of nothing at all; there is nothing to appear or disappear. Because it is unnameable we call it the Buddha Nature, and from there we laugh and cry, sleep and wake, without any attachment at all—it is a free way of living we call living in our Buddha Nature, “Never abiding in any place yet manifesting continually.”

This True Nature is what Hakuin expresses in the opening line of the Song of Zazen as “All sentient beings are essentially Buddhas.” This is not something that we attain from doing zazen and repeating the Buddha’s name—we already have it from birth. Rinzai says, “If you want to be no different from the patriarchs and buddhas, then never look for something outside yourself.” Rinzai also says that the mind is like a mirror, and that is why anything can be reflected in it. A mirror does not discriminate in its reflecting. If what is before it is a great mountain like Fuji,

the mirror does not consider whether the image will fit. A man or a woman, old or young, Mount Fuji or a sesame seed, the water of the Pacific Ocean or a cup of water, a diamond or a piece of glass—all are equal. In a mirror, the large, the small, the beautiful, and the ugly are all reflected equally. Nothing is splendid or poor or luxurious or impoverished; it is all equal. This is the wisdom of equal reflection. In the mirror, a rich person, a poor person, an educated person, and an uneducated person are exactly the same. To see all equally, as a mirror, with that clear state of mind, is called the mysterious perception of all things as equal. As Hakuin says, “How bright and clear the perfect moonlight of the Fourfold Wisdom!”

A mirror, when a flower comes before it, reflects back a flower. If a bird comes before it, it reflects a bird. The mirror reflects each thing exactly as it is, without any discrimination, and when that thing is gone, it leaves no trace behind. The True Self is like this mirror. Everyone at birth is endowed with this mind of the Buddha. It is not something we learn at school; it is part of our basic fabric, and from the origin it is undefiled. As Hakuin puts it, “All sentient beings are essentially Buddhas.”

As Hakuin also says, “Even those who have sat zazen only once will see all karma erased.” Even if for only a few times you have worked creatively and inventively on doing this zazen of letting go of knowledge and awakening to that with which we are already endowed at birth, you

will be able to see the results directly. “Realizing the form of no-form as form,” you will be able to see that there was nothing to be caught by in the first place. The essential words being given here—“All sentient beings are essentially Buddhas”—are accompanied with this most important phrase, “Realizing the form of no-form as form.” How to see that in its ultimate way is told to us in these words of Hakuin. Our breathing is very important, but what is this deep breath important for? It is important for us to be able to see that from the origin there has been nothing to be caught by, nothing to be stuck on, not even once.

Hakuin says, “Realizing the thought of no-thought as thought.” At this time we can let go of all of that conceptualization and humbly use our greatest potential and our wisdom freely. This is our Original Mind, our True Nature. When we see a person who is sad and suffering, we are able to spontaneously comfort them. That Original Mind with which we have all been born is that mind where we can see somebody who is suffering and become one with the suffering, able to comfort that person by becoming one with him or her. In that very moment when we can be with someone as if there is no separation between us, we know well this place of realizing the form of no-form as form. In a vibrant and living way we can live in this state of mind.

“Realizing the thought of no-thought as thought, whether singing or dancing, we are the voice of the

Dharma.” If we are always caught by our various ideas about things, and about what is happening to us and what is going on around us, then we cannot become clear in this way. We are not suddenly born in this very moment. Many millions of years of life from the very beginning of the universe have led up to this moment, and within each of us there are all the many components of our subconscious and our gathered awareness. Within that awareness we hold the stains of all human beings. We have to cut that awareness away, to get rid of it from the root, or we will be passing it down to all the people who come after us. Because we are here, because we are alive, we have this awareness of an “I,” but at the same time, if we do not cut that away completely, we will not be able to experience this place free from all egoistic filters.

From the times of old we have Engo Kokushi’s calligraphy with the words of Daito Kokushi and Hakuin Zenji’s calligraphy, which have been carefully preserved. There is also Miyamoto Musashi’s Eight-view Daruma, with its letters that are so powerful not because they have been written skillfully but because a vast state of mind is coming forth from them. This state of mind affects us when we look at them. We are astonished that the mind of a man could become so vast, taut, and energetic that we can feel it even today in this calligraphy. We can only be amazed and deeply impressed. That which has no form is being manifested there. This state of mind is Zen and also is called

the Buddha and is called life. Every human has this from birth, and we all have the same capability to encounter this Original Mind. Yet the majority of people cover this over with the ego.

From the olden days, people of the path have sought and followed the path of Zen, this path of suffering, to find an awakened teacher from whom to learn. "What is the ultimate teaching of Buddhism?" It is to see that Zen beyond form, that state of mind beyond form. "What is life?" Those teachers would give a great shout, or hold up a single finger, or hit many blows with a stick, or with their eyes look piercingly, glaring, and in that way only could it be expressed.

That which has no form is borrowing those techniques of form to express what cannot be put into words. This is where Zen and various other paths connect and where calligraphy and Zen join. Daito Kokushi's words, Hakuin Zenji's calligraphy, these states of mind and this energy, are still living and vivid.

In fact, this state of mind of Zen is what Zen brings forth and develops. This is that highest quality of mind of all people and it is an important grace. Hakuin Zenji is teaching us about this important zazen when he says, "All sentient beings are essentially Buddhas."

In the Tang Dynasty there was a famous Zen Master named Joshu. A monk asked him, "What was Bodhidharma's intention in going to China?"

Joshu answered, "The juniper tree in the front garden."

What did Daruma Daishi travel from India to do? What was his state of mind at that time? At the time of Joshu, it was common for monks to ask such questions: What's the ultimate truth of the Dharma? What is the Buddha? What is the actuality of the Buddha?

In India the Buddha represented an absolute, true, substantial body of truth. But by Joshu's time, Buddhism was more than a philosophical search for the truth. It was about how to hold our mind in everyday life.

How should our mind be? How should it be used? How do we take care of it? What's the best and most truthful way to live? How do we not get caught in ideas of a small self while remaining clear and unconfused? How do we work creatively on our state of mind? Who can teach us the best way to be human? These were the questions people were asking at the time.

During the Sixth Patriarch's time, this was the direction in which practice was moving. By the time the transmission reached Joshu, functioning in everyday life had become the focus of people's questions. How do we clarify our

mind twenty-four hours a day? How do we express true Mind? How should we use this clarified mind? This was the place from which people of practice worked.

The monk who asked Joshu about Daruma Daishi's intention in coming to China was familiar with this way of working on everyday mind. When 1,500 years ago, Daruma Daishi crossed the Bengal Bay by ship, sailing through great storms all the way around the peninsula of Malay and on to China, it was a huge adventure. What was his intention in going so far? Why did he do that? From this view, the monk inquired of Daruma Daishi, asking about his mind as a means of looking at how one's mind should be.

Rinzai Zenji answered the same question by saying that if Daruma Daishi had had the slightest bit of intention, he couldn't have saved even himself. If he had had the smallest self-conscious awareness of wanting to save someone, that would have been an egoistic thought, and even now he would not be liberated. But if there's no intention, why would he come?

Was there intention or not? Of course he came and taught the true correct Buddha Dharma, but did he intend to do that? Did he think he was going to save the Chinese? If he did, then Daruma was still unripe. His Dharma would have been lukewarm. When the sun comes up and shines its light on all things, does it have an intention to do that? If it did, then every day,

*The juniper tree in the
front garden*

Teizen no hakujushi

庭前柏樹子



it would wonder why no one ever thanked it. This is a huge process whereby all of the ten thousand things are given light. But we aren't like the sun. Because we don't let go of self-awareness, we aren't free of suffering. If there had been intention, Daruma Daishi couldn't have saved himself, but if he had no intention, there was no reason for him to have made the journey. Certainly he did not travel so far to spend nine years looking at the wall of a cave. He could've done that in India. He didn't have to travel to China to do that. Was there intent in Daruma's coming to China or not? Why did he go so far, anyway?

In our everyday life, no matter how honorably we act, no matter how splendid what we do seems, if we act with self-conscious awareness our actions will become confused.

Christ said it clearly: "Don't let the right hand know what the left hand is doing." If we know we're giving, it's no longer true giving. Likewise, Lao-tzu said that sages don't think of trying to liberating people. People just call on the sage, and the light is spread naturally. This is not because anyone is thinking it should be done like this or like that, but because it spreads naturally. And people naturally feel gratitude for this, as they do for the light and warmth of the sun.

In Buddhism, if we have an idea of having done something, or of having made great efforts, we suffer from it. Only when we work from morning until night without the idea of having worked at all can we become a person

of abundant mind. When we do zazen all day without thinking about having done it, that is living zazen. It's not about how long we have sat or how many years we've practiced. Thinking like that only brings suffering.

The Vimalakirti Sutra says that there's a way of arriving without having thought about arriving. There is a way of leaving without ever having thought about leaving. This is our natural way of being. When we think in terms of what must be done, those thoughts are a burden. The monk's question addressed humans' most basic way of being.

To this query Joshu answered, "The juniper tree in the front garden."

The monk responded, "I'm asking about the state of mind of Daruma Daishi. Please don't answer me by talking about the surroundings, I'm not asking about something external like that."

And Joshu said, "I am not talking about the surroundings."

The monk asked again, "Why did Bodhidharma come to China?"

Joshu replied, "The juniper tree in the front garden."

Joshu was in fact expressing his truest state of mind. Was there intention in Daruma Daishi? Or was there no intention?

If there was, it was the mind of empty-mindedness and the will of

willlessness. This is very subtle, yet a tree expresses it naturally. People are called legs with thinking, but trees are truly legs that don't think.

Can a juniper--or the oak or cherry or plum tree--have intention or not? Does it intend to provide shade? Of course plants don't have intention in the way that humans do, but then why do they bring forth such beautiful flowers? Why do they exude such a beautiful fragrance? Why are they so lovely in form? It seems as if there must be some deep, profound intention there. How can we look at the individuality of each and every thing? Is there intention in this universe or not?

In contrast to individual intentions of people trying to understand and make sense of something, what about the all-embracing, eternal intention of existing? Why do we exist? Why do we manifest this form? Is it only coincidental? In what direction are we evolving? What's the goal in that evolution?

You might think that all humans are on a journey toward becoming Buddhas, that we're all moving toward some kind of fulfillment. We might say that the universe itself is Buddha, that the universe itself is the existence of all things.

Every day we think thoughts and focus on our own ego and desires. We create our own ideas of good and bad, thinking in terms of what's good and bad for us, what profits us. We often label anyone who goes against

those notions as bad. When people are doing what we like, we get along well, but when they don't, the illusion of harmony immediately disappears. Then conflicts and struggles begin, becoming so ugly we can't imagine anything worse anywhere else in the whole world. Because we are each so full of our own wishes and so determined to fulfill them, we become more and more calculating and more and more manipulative, cultivating superfluous thoughts and decreasing the essence of our true mind. We become able to accept less and less.

When Joshu said, "The juniper tree in the front garden," he was not proclaiming a rehearsed idea but entrusting to the whole universe. He was not inserting the least bit of an "I," not adding the tiniest bit of restriction. He entrusted completely, with a huge magnanimous mind. We can feel this fullness in "The juniper tree in the front garden."

It's not about extinguishing our desires. We don't always have to be in a state of satori to be a good person. If we remain unattached to everyday desires, if we can be free of the ego filter, then those desires, just as they are, are our Buddha Nature. This insufficient physical body is our Buddha Nature. Our everyday way of being alive is the way of the Buddha, and the state of mind of the Buddha is expressed in our every action and state of mind. Yet we can't know this if we remain caught in our own position and our own dualistic ideas.

When we entrust completely to the Buddha, letting go of our thoughts and attachments and becoming part of the natural flow, this is the state of mind of Zen. We entrust to the Buddha, and there we find the peace of mind that's described in Pure Land teachings.

Ikkyu Zenji also said it:

A baby's mind more and more
becomes full of knowledge,
Becoming further and further
away from Buddha,
How sad!

We suffer because we protect and defend our attachments and desires. We suffer because we divide our awareness into two. We suffer because we become more calculating and dependent on our rational mind. We have to remember the truth of, "Unless we become the mind of a baby we cannot enter heaven."

What was the intention of Bodhidharma?

The juniper tree in the front garden

Having thrown away all distractions and needless thinking, having become one with the will of the universe, Daruma Daishi's state of mind is like that of a breathing wooden statue. When Joshu said, "The juniper tree in the front garden," he was throwing away every bit of his small self. The tree, in front of our eyes, has stood for a hundred or more years. Every day, whether it's raining or sunny, in the heat of summer and in the cold of winter, it continues manifesting

its energy, providing shade, creating the oxygen we need to breathe. The juniper tree in the front garden is one with the heavens and earth.

Hundreds of years later, the founder of Myoshinji, Muso Daishi, commented on Joshu's answer: "In the koan of the juniper tree in the garden there is a terrible thief!" This koan will truly steal away all of your extraneous thinking and needless ideas. It will take them all right out from under you. When you have no thinking left, when you have no ego clutter left, then Daruma Daishi's intention will come forth clearly.

When Daruma Daishi reached China, he and the Emperor of Ryo had an exchange of questions and answers in which the differences in the levels of understanding became clear. Daruma Daishi then crossed the Yangtze River and for nine years sat facing the wall of a cave. His form was like that of a juniper deep in the mountains.

For nine years, he was just sitting, not giving talks, not translating texts. Yet he had a greater influence on Chinese Buddhism than any other person ever. He not only liberated many people in his own time, but even today he gives birth to our zazen with his huge influence. He's still being born within our zazen. We need to experience his way of being. Sitting without small intentions, our zazen matches the way of the heavens and earth.

Through our training and zazen we sweep away our attachments. People who practice the arts and play sports,

those who perform noh and kabuki,
do the same. They practice, crushing
their desires and ego mechanisms,
until they give life to the fullest
potential of their talent. This is how
people of the arts create masterpieces.

All of our ideas of beauty and
ugliness, of wanting this but not that,
of good and bad, prevent the mind
of the Buddha from being expressed.

Standing, sitting, waking, sleeping, in
every action, in every movement, the
Buddha can be expressed in us. We
have to clarify this completely.

“The juniper tree in the front garden.”
This is our clarified and purified
human state of mind, our daily
actuality.

These words were spoken by the founder of the Unmon line, Unmon Bunne Zenji, who lived from 864 to 949. Unmon Daishi once said to an assemblage of his students, “I won’t ask you about the days before the fifteenth of the month, but give me a phrase about the days after.”

In the Zen dojo on the fifteenth day of August there is a ceremony called the “urabon.” According to the Buddhist teachings this is about Mokuren Sonja’s mother having fallen into the hell of hungry ghosts and suffering terribly. Seeing her there, Mokuren was astonished, and with his supernatural powers he went to save her, bearing all kinds of food.

“Mother! You are so skinny and starving and suffering—please eat these things I have brought for you! I brought this food for you, so that you will be able to eat.” Saying this, he laid the food in front of his mother.

His starving, skinny mother, who was so thankful and happy, said, “Mokuren, thank you so much! I haven’t been able to eat for days and days and I am ravenously hungry. Thank you so much!” Having said this, his mother turned to eat the food. But as she began to put the food into her mouth, it immediately turned into flames, and she couldn’t eat it. Even with his powers, there was nothing Mokuren could do to change this.

Next he said to his mother, “Well then, how about something to drink?” I brought drinks too. Please drink

these!” As he said this, he handed a drink to his mother. But at the very instant that she started to put it into her mouth, it too changed into flames. She couldn’t eat and she couldn’t drink. Even when the food and drink were right in front of her mouth, no matter how hungry and thirsty she was, she couldn’t eat or drink. He saw the suffering of his mother and was so disappointed at the inability of his own powers to cure the situation that he went to the Buddha to ask him for help.

The Buddha said that even the most advanced person may think that his or her own child is more adorable than another person’s child, may think that his or her own family is more lovable than anyone else’s family. This kind of belief may easily find a home in any person’s mind. Yet this belief is what brings pain and suffering in the world. The Buddha told Mokuren that most people in society live with this very belief, and his mother had fallen into that hell as their representative. The Buddha also told him that this offered a way to liberate society.

Then the Buddha told him to do training for ninety days with this deep vow. The dojo, or place of training, had one continuous training period from April 15 to July 15, during which time the people in training there could not go anywhere. The Buddha said that, if an offering was given on the last day of that training period for everyone who had repented and spent those ninety days purifying their minds and becoming clear, then for the first time with that pure mind

Every day is a good day

Nichi nichi kore kojitsu

日々是好日



his mother could be liberated. This is what the Buddha told Mokuren.

On the fifteenth of July, when the three-month training period is formally finished, there is a traditional reviewing of one's behavior during that time. Even today this practice is continued just as it was started during the time of the Buddha. It was on this very day of the fifteenth of July that Master Unmon said to the gathered assembly, "Without asking you to say anything about yesterday, what do you say about the days after the fifteenth?" He was saying, I am not asking you about the past. How is it right now, right this very minute? Each of you—answer this now.

This kind of challenge is the way of Zen. Without any concern with what was of yesterday, how is it in this moment, right here, right now? The living energy of this moment at hand—this present instant—this is the alive place of Zen.

What has already passed will never return. This does not mean that we should not look at our past actions and review our behavior. There is nothing so important as that. But the best way to purify our past unskillful behavior is to be totally attentive to our footsteps of this present moment. And if we worry too much about things that have not yet come, fretting about the future and how it will be, we will only narrow our mind of this present moment. We cannot let go of the actuality we are encountering in this very moment; we cannot let this very precious opportunity escape.

To live in this very moment with all of our innate wisdom and full, taut energy is the Buddha Dharma.

As has been said from ancient times, "If you want to see the past karmic affiliation, look at the face of the present moment. If you don't know what the face of the future will be, look at the karmic affiliations of the present moment." This is how it is seen. All of the results of the past are manifested in this very moment. And the future? If we look at the present thoroughly and clearly we can see how the future will be as well.

If we can see the present clearly and correctly we will not make mistakes in the future. Yet this one moment of the present is gone in a flash, so it cannot be held on to in our consciousness. In every single moment, our life energy is born anew; in every instant it is freshly born. When we are not attached to the past or the present or the future, we flow along in each instant—not attached to anything that we experience, just flowing along like a gurgling river. To experience this is satori.

On the fifteenth of July, Unmon said, "I won't ask you about the days before the fifteenth of the month, but give me a phrase about the days after." Since nobody could respond to his excellent state of mind, Unmon answered for them, "Every day is a good day." Not one single person could come up with an answer, so he had to answer for them.

These words of Unmon are truly

excellent words of peace. We use them often, but what is important is whether or not we can truly and consistently be in this state of mind. In what way was Unmon Daishi saying these words, “Every day is a good day”? Was he just saying today is fine, today is fine, like some yes-man? If so, there is no need for Unmon Daishi to appear here to say this to us. For Unmon to come forth there must be some actual quality and essence manifested.

Yet people of training, even during the ninety days of a prescribed training period, don't have such a great effect on their environment. This world is full of contradictions. Things don't go as we want them to—this is the way the world is. A mountain crumbles because of a typhoon. While sound asleep each person in a whole family is pushed to death by a train. In one instant of a great earthquake people are trapped under collapsed houses. Whole families are destroyed. Or, from an unexpected accident, a

person is suddenly unable to work for the rest of his or her life.

Even though it is said that the world is about how we carry our mind, with just the decisions of our mind we cannot stop our pain or our death. When Unmon Zenji said, “I won't ask you about the days before the fifteenth of the month, but give me a phrase about the days after,” this essence was about cutting away all traces of any previous conditioning or previous experience, about not holding on to any history or any past happiness, about cutting all of those away and actualizing true wisdom and then living single-mindedly in accordance with it. The actualized essence of this is very necessary.

The priest Setcho Juken, who lived from 980 to 1052, wrote poems on the one hundred cases of the Blue Cliff Record. On this case of Unmon he wrote,

Terrorists have attacked cities and people across the world, and the horror of those attacks has not allowed life to return to normal. The fear continues. Those killed and injured are written about in the papers, while those who survived are filled with the possibility of their own deaths. It is said that humans can become Buddhas, but they can also become devils. Those possibilities are apparent when something like this happens.

When people, through no fault of their own, are killed by those who are so dissatisfied and discontent, the entire world becomes a battlefield. When people are under severe pressure, their dissatisfaction can explode. Then hate gives birth to hate, anger gives birth to anger. There is no solution to this. When someone wants to kill people in great numbers, there's no way to prevent it or to prepare for it.

People all over the world become more insecure and full of fear. Buddhism says that human beings have five types of eyes: physical eyes, heavenly eyes, eternal eyes, Dharma eyes, and Buddha eyes.

If we look at human beings with our physical eyes, there is no question that we are animals. The heavenly eyes see things that are far away; they have no perception of a physical body. Eternal eyes see humans as they really are, in true emptiness; these are the eyes of wisdom. Dharma eyes are those that see the emptiness and see this world and humans as beautiful; these are the

eyes of the artist. The Buddha eyes see all beings as our own children, to be loved from pure compassion. To see everything as empty and every person as our own child is to love everything dearly. To open the eye of compassion is enlightenment or satori.

Our transient naked eye sees humans in their animal form. If there is any way to stop the idiocy of people today it is through Buddhism, which sees and knows all people as Buddhas.

A great and famous Zen master named Master Joshu Jushin (778-897) lived during the Tang Dynasty in China.

Once a monk asked Joshu, "Does a dog have Buddha Nature?" The monk wanted to know if even a dog has Buddha Nature.

The Buddha taught that all things--even plants, trees, and grasses--are without exception endowed with Buddha Nature. Does this hungry, greedy dog, who goes searching from garbage pail to garbage can, also have Buddha Nature? This mind that is always looking for something, wishing for something to be thankful for and always getting caught on everything that happens, this unawakened person like me, is there really Buddha Nature there? This is what the monk was asking.

This type of question makes use of the commonplace things among which we live. In making use of those things, we find the true mastery of Zen.



Mu

無

Without hesitating, Joshu replied, “MU.”

This answer of Joshu has become an enormous challenge used by all people of training to realize truth. New people of training have to pass this barrier before going further with their training. It's basic that all beings are from the origin Buddhas; this is a given, a bottom-line understanding. Joshu did not negate this. If we look at it in a different way, he is saying that the substance of Buddha Nature is Mu. Joshu is presenting this from his own experience, and it's from there that this mu is born and has profound meaning. To realize this we have to know the same experience; an intellectual explanation won't do. If we don't go beyond that, we can't realize the true experience of all existence.

Buddha Nature is that with which we all are endowed prior to our personality and our character. It's the same in everyone and unites all beings. It is pure human nature.

It can also be called the true Dharma, that law which is true for the original mind of all beings. Because it is a law of mind, it has no form and no substance. It has no color, yet it has light and a life energy that brings wonder. It is energy that has no form yet has the ability to make all things happen, to move everything. This is why none of the dualistic opposites of the world--such as male versus female, political power versus powerlessness--have anything to do with true wisdom. The energy of

this is the same in every era, forever, without change.

This energy is shared by all people. Even if we die, it doesn't die. It's beyond birth and death, embracing everything while going beyond space. It transcends all time. That which is unlimited and unable to be described is Buddha Nature. Because we don't realize this we are confused and deluded from dusk to dawn. To this question Joshu answered succinctly, “Mu.”

The person who compiled the Mumonkan, Mumon Ekai Roshi, took six years to realize this koan. He wrote that all day, every day, he carried this mu, forgetting everything else until he even forgot to keep his feet moving. Then, when he heard the drum signaling a ceremony he suddenly broke through completely. In the first chapter of the Mumonkan, Joshu's Mu, he writes, “With all of the 360 smallest joints, the 84,000 pores, we bring forth this great doubt and day and night work intently at it. Do not attempt nihilistic or dualistic interpretations. It is like having gulped a red hot iron ball. You try to spit it out but can't.”

Your whole body, your whole mind, has to go into this from the top of your head to the bottoms of your feet. With your whole body and mind you have to throw yourself completely into this, giving rise to this great doubt. You must bring the actuality of your concentration into full view. You have to melt into oneness with Mu.

Your whole body and mind are thrown into that mu as you become it. Day and night, work intently at it. Do not attempt conceptual interpretations. From morning until night and from night until morning, become a complete fool: muuuuumuuuu. Bring your awareness into one word, focus your attention into one point, and come to know this place where it is as if you have a burning red hot iron ball in your throat that you can neither swallow nor spit out. Entering this place, you are aware of nothing but mu. This is what is most important; this is samadhi. Samadhi is the central point of Buddhism, the fulcrum. To understand the truth of any religion there has to be this pure concentration.

Continue without slacking for a moment—muu muu muu—keeping it going until you enter samadhi. Cut away all of the illusory discriminating knowledge and consciousness you have accumulated, and keep on working harder. All of that muddy past awareness and ideas, all of that gathered previous knowledge you thought was necessary, all of it obscures your clear awareness. With muuumuumuu, concentrate and let go of all of that extra thinking. Then you return to the state of mind you had at birth and continue for one week, two weeks, one year, two years, until your efforts come to fruition and there's no longer any sense of a difference between inside and outside, self and other. You become one layer of mu--no more self, no more heavens and earth, only one

layer of mu. Then it's as if you have seen a dream but are unable to speak of it. Yet no matter how fantastic this state of mind is, you can't tell other people about it. No one can understand. You are like a mute seeing a dream and laughing, but no one else can get it. You are certain that this is the place the Buddha was talking about and smile.

But this is not yet enlightenment. Suddenly you smash the barrier. You astonish heaven and shake the earth. You kill the Buddha if you meet the Buddha, and you kill the ancient masters if you meet them. On the brink of life and death you are utterly free. In the six realms and the four modes of life you live, with great joy, a genuine life in complete freedom.

The actual experience of that place of no more inside or outside, just one layer of mu, is truly wonderful, but this is still not the complete picture. There is no you there, so the ability to create is negated. That which creates the heavens and earth, that true self, has to be realized. It must be manifested. This place of no inside and no outside is what the ancients called the Great Death. From there, from that absolute mu, you have to come back to life, exploding into the place that startles the heavens and the earth.

Within each person's actual truth we die and die and die, and then with one touch from the outside our mind is reborn completely with vivid life energy. Startling the heavens and the earth, we are suddenly reborn. It

can be only this way, as if the skies are falling. Everything we ever held on to is let go of, and we can then realize this world of nothing at all in one instant of experience. If you know this experience, it is as if you have snatched the sword of the great General Kan. You kill the Buddha if you meet him, and you kill the ancients if you meet them. A totally free and infinite functioning is born. In this whole world there is nothing to be thankful to, nothing to enter your awareness in any way. This is because even an idea of something to be thankful for is already dualistic. In clear awareness there is nowhere for even the tiniest bit of shadow to enter.

On the brink of life and death we are utterly free. There is no way for even birth and death to remain. Even that great problem is no longer something to be attached to. In all the modes of life we know great joy. We become all life-forms--we know this world, the animals' world, or any world. We have nothing to be deluded by. We are attached to nothing and moved around by nothing. As Rinzai puts it, to be in hell is like being at the amusement park. Even if we are right smack in the middle of the worst hell, it's as if we are in the best amusement park.

In telling us how to do mu, Mumon says to put it all aside and look at mu with everything you have; all of your concentration, every bit of your body and mind. If from morning until night you continue your attentive focus with no gap, then it is as it was described in the old days: from a

flavorless stone, a spark will rise. But most important of all is to allow no gaps for thoughts. This is the only way it works. Mumon Ekai teaches us from his own experience and kindly explains in greatest detail. This is the true teaching for this koan, not Joshu's one word of "Mu." We are not looking at anything extra or holding anything else in our mind when we do that mu. Our practice ends with that, but the actual case continues: "It is said that there is Buddha Nature in a dog. So why does the master say mu?"

The Buddha said that all beings have Buddha Nature, so why do you say Mu about this dog? Why do you say there is nothing there?

Joshu replies that it is because of the karma of our five desires. Joshu makes the truth of the matter clear. He acknowledges those desires and the various conflicts in society. But then why does the Buddha say we are all Buddhas? If we have Buddha Nature, why do we argue and why are we deluded? If we are honest, we will always come up against this problem.

Joshu's answer is succinct: "Look! Or have you lost the Buddha Nature? Don't think anything extraneous!"

Here Joshu says it clearly. It's not about analyzing the six realms; that kind of mentality is mistaken from the bottom up. Joshu is not thinking about those various realms but is saying not to double your awareness. This is why his teacher, Nansen, said, "The three thousand Buddhas don't know it but the raccoon and the

bear-cat do--why?" What is being said here is that this karma has to be seen. Our eyes and ears and nose and mouth and body and feelings, all of our six roots, have to encounter that sword of mu. Everything we touch with our eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and awareness, all of it, every attachment, has to be cut away to become that one mu, or else it is impossible.

A different monk asked, "Does a dog have Buddha Nature or not?"

This was the same question, but Joshu saw what this monk needed and said, "U."

The monk said then, as if grabbing Joshu's tail, "If we have Buddha Nature, why did we dive into this shit bag?"

Joshu answered, "Knowingly we transgressed."

In the records of Joshu a high official asks Joshu if even he, Joshu, one of such profound wisdom, will still fall into hell? Joshu replies, "Me? I am going straight in ahead of everyone!"

The official was amazed and asked, "How can you say that?"

"Because if I don't go there, how will I be able to meet you?"

Joshu said only "Mu," but the greatest truth of the whole of the heavens and earth is manifested there. All of the roots of the six realms and four modes of life are ripped away. All of it is extinguished and let go of, and all of the roots of delusion and attachment are obliterated. This is the great Wisdom. All of our conditioned thinking forms the great doubt, and there is no person of training without this doubt. When our eyes are opened, we awaken to great faith. Here is the foundation of all religion.

And so Mumon Ekai Zenji says in his poem:

"The dog! the Buddha Nature!
The Truth is manifested in full!
A moment of yes and no
Lost are your body and soul!"

The Song of Zazen - Zazen Wasan

All sentient beings are essentially Buddhas.

[#40 Nov 1997] The original Body of the Buddha, the essence of awakening, the conclusion, is directly laid out before us in this way.

It is often expressed as the ocean being the source and the waves being the phenomena. There are no waves without water and without water, no waves. Without the source, there are no phenomena, without the phenomena there is no source.

Even though we sentient beings are walking around twenty-four hours a day thinking about all kinds of things, our true source is never separated from clear Buddha nature. There is no Buddha somewhere else that is separate from this mind of ignorant people. Herein lies the deep awakening of Buddha.

As with water and ice, there is no ice without water;

[#40 Nov 1997] Niso Eka Daishi is quoted in his records as saying, "Ice comes from water, water is stopped as ice." When ice melts it becomes water. Ice is born from water, and ice stops the nature of water from being able to function. When ice melts, it returns to the nature of the water that it originally was, and from this that function comes forth. Our complaining and grumbling, desires and ignorance, all of these delusions that we all have, come forth from the arising of one deluded mind-moment. If these arise, our originally still and tranquil mind cannot be

found anywhere. Our clarity of mind is buried under the mind of delusion. Our clear mind is exchanged for that deluded state of mind. We can awaken and realize that we are in a state of delusion, and of its own the natural state of our mind, tranquil and holding on to nothing, again comes forth. The ocean of our mind returns to its clear, pure, and quiet original nature. The universe is surging with this bright pure unattached essence, and we have never separated from it. The relationship between Buddha and sentient being is just this. They are not separate.

apart from sentient beings, there are no Buddhas.

[#40 Nov 1997] From the Mind of deluded beings Buddhas are born. From suffering Mind of deluded beings the Buddha who can love all humankind is realized. From this confused and deluded Mind, that which can embrace and see clearly, that Buddha wisdom that is free from everything, is brought forth.

The Buddha that realizes this is not something that exists separately from ignorant, deluded people. Because it is not something that exists apart from deluded beings, sentient beings and Buddhas exist simultaneously. While having the body of a deluded person and the deluded thoughts of an ignorant person--just as we are--we are already endowed with the wisdom of an enlightened Buddha. Buddha's compassion exists within us simultaneously, and simultaneously the Buddha practice and Buddha's actions are born.

Baso Doitsu Zenji was a master of a profound and fine quality. He was described as one who has the eye of a tiger and the movement of an ox; his eyes were like a tiger's in their

sharpness, and his way of moving was solid, like that of a great ox. Baso Doitsu Zenji's most frequently used expression was "Soku Shin Soku Butsu." (These words are nearly impossible to translate into English. "This Mind, This Buddha" is what we will use here. "Immediate Mind, Immediate Buddha" and "Present Mind, Present Buddha" are also insufficient possibilities.)

During his entire teaching life he used these words—the Mind, just as it is, is the Buddha. To put it another way, "All beings are from the origin essentially Buddhas." The mind of the deluded person is the Buddha Nature just as it is. For example, if we took the emotions and thoughts of people—joy, sadness, suffering, sense of a self or other, ideas of good or bad—and instead of dividing everything up into such small separated bits we gathered the whole universe into one whole, that is this actual body. This is "This Mind, This Buddha." We are not talking about someone who doesn't experience these, but about the Mind that embraces all of these.

Not knowing how close the truth is, we seek it far away—what a pity!

[#40 Nov. 1997] The Buddha is said to have exclaimed at the moment of his awakening, “How wondrous! How wondrous! All beings are endowed with this same clear nature to which I have just awakened! Only because they dwell in delusion and desires and attachments it is not able to be brought forth!”

All beings, from their birth are already endowed with compassion and wisdom that do not differ in the slightest way from those of the Buddha. This wisdom, with no attachment to a small self, can see all beings as one and give them life and give them all compassion and love. Yet, because we still have an attachment to a small personal self, we have so many deluded thoughts, thinking we are most adorable and being attached to that personal “I,” and that is what covers over our wisdom and compassion. This is what the Buddha taught from his own experience.

There is an old poem:

Don't think that the moon is
clear and bright because the
clouds part,
From the beginning there was
always a bright moon shining.

The bright moon is shining. Even though tonight it is covered by clouds and we can't see it, it moon has not

disappeared; it is always shining brightly. It is not that it shines only when the clouds have passed by. Even within those the moon shines continually. Look at the truth of this!

It is not because our deluded thoughts and desires and attachments end that we have a bright light. Within them the light shines brightly always. When we know that light of the radiant moon we know from within that those delusions and attachments have no meaning. The delusions and attachments just as they are have the fixed form of ice yet also the nature of water. They are hardened and cannot move. If we let go of that hardened mass, allow it to melt, the water of the Buddha Nature can flow easily and continually. Then we become quiet and naturally full and surging like the mouth of the waterfall. Deep and quiet and even, as it says in the Shodoka [Song of Enlightenment], “That quiet wisdom of enlightenment is like the bright round full moon which is reflected in the still full water's surface.”

The Mind of the Buddha Nature, as it is, is received there. Yet there is no awareness that the Buddha's Nature is being reflected, just as there is no awareness that the moon is being reflected there. Are we the moon? Is the moon us? Is the water the moon? Is the moon the water? Are we the Buddha? Or is the Buddha us?

... *what a pity!*

Deluded people like us, with so many thoughts, are we really endowed with that deep compassionate and wise Mind of Buddha? Is that deep compassionate Mind of Buddha really our mind, which is always thinking about this and that and the other thing? Not even needing to consider this difference truly is the Nature of the Buddha.

Yet another poem from old says,

The moon reflects into the
bottom of the water yet leaves
no traces.

Sitting in the moon-water dojo,
grasping at 10000 empty
flower disciplines.

*We are like one who in the midst of
water cries out desperately in thirst.*

[#59 - June 2002] Vimalakirti became sick, not because he himself is deluded and confused, but because he is not in some other world. He is understanding of, and existing right along with, the suffering deluded, “*Manjusri, my sickness comes from ignorance and thirst for existence and it will last as long as do the sicknesses of all living beings. Were all living beings to be free from sickness, I also would be free of sickness.*”

He tells the reason for the sickness. If we ask what is the source of that sickness and delusion, he tells us that it is ignorance. Ignorance is what is without brightness and wisdom, our living only from basic instincts and desires. This is human’s most deeply rooted, basic delusion. People live with desires and instincts as long as they are alive. From those instincts we seek things to eat, we want to stay alive, and these are beyond any idea about good and bad, but come from human’s most basic wish to be alive.

It is just like when we are very thirsty and we long intensely for a drink of water. We instinctually continue to seek for these needs. But if we get attached to those things which we need, our instincts then become the base of everything we do and they turn into deep suffering. That attached suffering is what then causes a deluded life of confusion and indecision.

Greed and fulfillment become a cycle and get stuck onto everything we do. This is what is called attached desire, just like when we are so thirsty we can’t drink enough water and don’t feel satisfied no matter how much we drink, it is this kind of extreme, intense desire.

The Buddha taught that this is the source of great pain and suffering. That humans have physical, sexual desires is the law of the survival of the species. It is a natural instinct with which we are all endowed. All living

... desperately in thirst.

things are endowed with this basic instinct to stay alive.

But this desire can become something for our own ego and self-satisfaction and when it becomes blind desire, physical love can hurt others hearts and even make us take others lives, bringing great confusion. There is also

our intense wish to stay alive forever, to want to live as long as possible.

In a very real way to keep our life going is an instinct, but if we refuse to allow death to naturally take its course this can be also be a huge attachment that makes us move and act meaninglessly.

We are like the son of a rich man who wandered away among the poor.

[#44-45 1999-12]

In the Shingé Bon (Lotus Sutra, chapter 4) we have the story the wealthy man who lost his only son. When the son was just he became lost or was led away, and the rich man lost his only son. He was so miserable and suffering so much, he used every possible means available to look in every direction to find his precious son. Since that time the rich man could never find anything happy and every day continually thought only about his lost son and was depressed. Many years passed and one day, in front of the man's house, a beggar came for handouts. From a window on the upper floor of the building the father saw this beggar and he recognized him. As if he had been electrified, he directly intuited that this miserable beggar was the son

that had been lost for so many years. Perceiving directly, he suddenly just knew that this was his only son. The rich man came down swiftly in a great hurry from the top of the house and said to the servants in his household, "That beggar! Bring him back, bring him into the house!" They followed his orders and the younger workers sought after the beggar, took his hand, held his shoulder and brought him to the house. The beggar was trembling and couldn't understand. He begged them to let him go. He said that he wouldn't come here again and that he had never stolen from anyone.

The younger workers said, "No, it isn't that. Our household master said to call to you and bring you back to the house. Come with us. No one is bullying or accusing you."

... wandered away among the poor ...

“What? Why would such a huge household’s top person have any business with me anyway? There must be some mistake here. Please leave me be -- let go of me!!”

As the beggar couldn’t believe he was being called by the master of such a huge house and was sure he would be killed, he passed out and fell over. The servants took him home to the father of the household. How pitiful he felt for what his son had become, his own son. Now, while the boy had come home to his home of birth, he couldn’t recognize it. He was being intimately called to come home by his own father, yet he could not receive or believe it. Is there anything as pitiable as that?

The father used his wisdom to figure out what was the best thing to do next. He had his servants offer his beggar son a menial job with a place to live. “You’ll be given food and clothing. You can’t be a homeless beggar forever; you’ll be unhappy in the future. Something with a little security is better.”

From far away the father watched as the son came in the back gate and was given clothes, food and a room. Finally the beggar was in his own place. Every day he dumped toilets. For four or five years living in one house, even if it is only doing the lowest work, the various ways

of doing things in that household become clear to him and the people became his friends.

One day he was called to the head servant. “It’s been four or five years now. You clean the gardens, please. We need someone who is used to this place to do that. Your pay will be increased.” He advanced to gardening, and then four or five years later was given another job with more responsibility. The estate manager said to him, “You work honestly and have good potential. Your way of working is different from everyone else. As you have a character like this, we’ll give your work to someone else. You should be doing the flowers and doing the arranging of the rooms instead. You take care of the rooms from now on!” While he had been a beggar with no planned home, as time proceeded and he worked everyday and kept a planned life, he became settled and easy and walked with confidence.

From the garden now he moved up to caring for the rooms and his spending money again increased. As he took care of the rooms, he became good friends with people who lived in the house. How the servants and the master lived all became clear to him and he became friends with everyone who worked there. The head of the help said finally, “You now know well the face of the master. Give the rooms

... wandered away among the poor ...

to someone else. You are to become the master's helper. Take care of things around him since he is getting old. He'll be very happy about that."

From then on, the son took care of everything around the master of the house. By taking things in and out of the storehouse, the treasures and the valuables became his responsibility. Still he never had a thought that he was the son of the master nor that these were his own belongings and riches.

When he was getting used to this, the Master became older with not much time left to live. The old man decided to read his will and called everyone, his family and relatives, the city's people and lawyers, as witnesses. "Recently in this house there is one young man who has been taking care of me all the time. Right now, with everyone gathered here, I want to speak clearly to all of you. I want

to tell you about this young man's essence. He doesn't know anything about it yet. When he was young and couldn't yet understand anything, he became lost. We were unable to find him anywhere. He wandered while having a home because he didn't know that. While having a father he didn't know to where his father was. But this is in fact my one and only son. There is proof of this without fail. When I die I want to give this house and all of these possessions to my son."

For the first time he announced that this was his son and he was the father. In all these years the son had been living there he realized for the first time this was his own house. The rich man had waited years so as not to surprise the son who had been lost, in order that he could be comfortable in his own place in a settled way. He had done this with great perseverance and patience.

The reason we transmigrate through the Six Realms is because we are lost in the darkness of ignorance.

The Buddha taught that the concept of “innen”, cause and effect, is most important. As written in the sutras, it was according to knowledge of the working of karmic laws that the Buddha experienced enlightenment. In Buddhism, our existence is seen to take place in six realms and all six realms are based in ignorance. Like the spokes of a wheel, we turn through them over and over again.

There are three dark and difficult realms: the hell realm, the realm of angry demons, and the realm of hungry ghosts. The other three are the realms of animals, of humans and of heavenly beings. Only in the human realm do beings have the ability to reflect on and repent their behavior. From that self-reflection a Buddha can be born. Heavenly beings for example cannot reflect upon themselves as their lives are filled only with the distractions of pleasure. All of us are subject to the law of karma and due to our choices and actions rotate through these six realms. We all are born and die. We will be reborn again, but not necessarily as human beings. Buddhism teaches that we may be reborn as dogs, cats, horses, or cows.

We might not know what our future will bring, but may have a feeling that our life energy took a different form in the past. You might understand the

way of a dog, a plant, a dragonfly or a butterfly. We all have taken many forms and expressions.

The focus of true religion is understanding oneself and working toward becoming a Buddha. The six realms are part of our past, but we can also find these six realms in the unfolding of our future. When we are angry and don't want to step back, we embody an angry demon. At other times, when our chest burns with desire, we are in the world of greedy demons. There are times when we are full of desire, unable to let go of ideas of what we want, unable to eat or even sleep, obsessed, filled with fears and worries from morning to night. Then we inhabit the realm of hell. There are moments of joy and lightness, playing in the realm of the heavenly beings. We are in human form right now. We have the special ability to feel shame and remorse, to repent our deeds and clarify our state of mind. Only from such a state of mind can a Buddha come forth. The chance to embody as a human being is rare, and we must not waste this opportunity.

The six realms are found in our daily life, as well. Where did this path start? Where is the source of delusion? In Buddhism, it is said that life itself is the basis of unclarity.

Past karmic connections account for

... darkness of ignorance.

us being born in this very specific way. We begin this life totally unaware, our actions based only on our desires. The six sense organs develop: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, mind. Through them, we receive stimulus and energy. We develop preferences, likes and loves. Attachment arises; we want what we like and avoid what we don't like. In this way we develop into adult human beings, living life, working and dying. We all will have to face decline, sickness, old age, and death.

After his awakening, the Buddha sat under the Bodhi tree to understand these karmic laws.

Where does the suffering of old age and death come from?

It comes from the awareness of being alive.

Where does the awareness of being alive come from?

It comes from attachment to our body and mind.

Where does the attachment come from?

It comes from grasping and holding on to what we like.

Why do we want it?

Because we perceived it with our senses.

Why do we have these senses?

Because we received life.

Why did we receive life?

Because it is the aim of life to perpetuate

This is the root cause of our suffering, an unaware part of our existence.

Contemplating this, the Buddha realized the truth of karma. Lack of awareness is the basis of the six realms, and unawareness brings forth new unawareness. To have to go over and over through the six realms is the fate of all those who have received life.

Is there no way to liberate oneself from constant rebirth in the six realms?

Our true nature lives within this world of false self and inequality—we can live there in a true way if we go beyond delusive ideas and do not let go of our truthful way of being. This is what Vimalakirti is teaching: living the world in a way that is beyond dualism, a way that is awakened completely. Living in the way of the Sixth Patriarch when he tells us to not add on ideas of good and bad to anything that we perceive externally, and internally to not be moved around by whatever concerns there may be.

This does not mean to turn away from society but to stay right in it and polish the mind by not being moved around by anything that comes along. To know how to do that we first have

... darkness of ignorance.

to do sesshin and do that polishing to where we're not holding on to anything whatsoever, not moved around by anything at all. Seeing that from the origin there has never been anything whatsoever.

Master Takuan wrote in his letters to Yagyū Tajime-no-kami (The Unfettered Mind), how the main point of living like this is to not be stopped and caught by anything. To do this we have to give every single bit of our energy and passion to burning

completely, with complete intensity to become that oneness. As Master Mumon Ekai writes, from the top of our heads to the bottom of our feet we have to give everything to not be pulled around at all, to not be caught and pulled off balance by what we encounter or by what we perceive. This is the essence of zazen. To realize this and to live in this way, to actualize it—that is what is most important.

Going further and further astray in the darkness, how can we ever be free from birth-and-death?

People hold onto their own thoughts from their own history, their own struggle, their own opinions. From within that there are so many problems from the past. We all want to resolve these. But it is not the case that our mind cannot open until we resolve every one of those past problems.

We all have dark, unclear and murky places in our mind, but believe and know that the Buddha-nature is like the sunlight. This is not something that we look to find here or there—

not a something out there—instead be that sunshine completely!

As the sun rises and shines on everything the darkness disappears. Everything is clear, right smack in front of our eyes. Houses, rivers, mountains—each thing as it is—high when it should be high, and low when it should be low, as it is. And the sun is shining equally on every single thing.

The sun does not only shine when there are no clouds in the sky. It shines even when there are many clouds

... be free from birth-and-death?

obscuring the sky. Even above dark clouds it shines continually.

To let go of all of our thoughts to where we have nothing to hold onto at all—this is zazen. To do zazen with a gloomy face, holding onto many thoughts, is not real zazen. Rather, to let go of everything we hold onto—this is the subtle flavor of zazen.

Because we are so used to holding onto something, we have counting of the breath, koans, mantras—all for realizing that place where there is not one speck to be held onto at all. This is the truth of the Buddha-dharma.

[Platform Sutra commentary Chpt. 1]

As for the Mahayana practice of zazen, there are no words to praise it fully.

No matter in what world we might find ourselves, to have no fear. To know, to see from a place of courage and to forget ourselves completely. To accept and receive whatever comes to us in any situation. To be able to know the serenity which that courage brings. For this, we do sesshin.

Even though our legs hurt and we have so much to do in our outside lives, we come here. We come here to be able to drink all of it down, to know the abundance of realizing it all, and to know how to be clear in each and every mind-moment. We realize this in every moment here. At the beginning, we have a hard time. We are in darkness, because we are unripe. But we have to pass through that darkness with deep

courage, with determination, until that small-self is not what is moving us around anymore. The small-self is so easily moved around by everything it encounters. Because we ripen in a larger perspective, we are able to know a place where we are no longer moved around. We are not under the influence of the small-self's shadow anymore. It does not linger.

We have to center in this way of being whole-hearted. And in this way we have the words of the sixth patriarch who tells us how: "*To anything we perceive externally, we add no ideas of good and bad. And to whatever is arising within, we give it no acknowledgment.*" The Sixth Patriarch has given a definition of zazen. "Za" means to not give rise

... practice of zazen ...

to any thoughts of good or bad whatsoever, concerning external matters. Everything in the external world is dualistic. There are good things and bad things, smart people and foolish people, sick people and healthy people. These are all dualistic, in a world of good and bad. We have to cut all of that and to see everything directly without taking our eye off of it: to not be repulsed by it or afraid of it, to see it clearly and directly just as a mirror takes in everything that comes to it.

A mirror does not get at all confused by what is reflected in it; it does not give rise to any thoughts about what is being reflected there at all. To not be wandering in our mind or be confused and deluded at all, this is the “Za” of zazen, according to the Sixth Patriarch. It is not our physical body alone that sits zazen, it is our mind.

No matter what problem may arise in the world around us, it is nothing more than a reflection in a mirror. A mirror reflects all things and in the same way a mind reflects everything

that comes to it, while being caught on nothing. This is the definition of “Za”. Living zazen is defined here. To look directly within and be unmoved by anything; this is the “Zen”, of zazen.

As the Sixth Patriarch’s famous words say, “*From the origin there is not a single thing, where is there anyplace for any speck to land?*” In our mind there is, from the origin, nothing whatsoever, not a single speck of anything to hold on to or to be recognized; this is our true nature. In our mind we reflect all worlds, but are caught on none of them. We go beyond all dualism and we drink down everything. We realize the world in this way. If we don’t become like this we cannot correctly reflect the world. It is said in the Bible that God sends rain equally to good and bad people. We function in the same way, whatever it is, just as it is. We drink it all down, the good and the bad; we receive and accept all things.

[Vimalakirti Sutra commentary;
Chptr. 4.

The Six Paramitas, such as giving, maintaining the precepts,

[See the chapter “The Six Paramitas”.]

and various other good deeds like invoking the Buddha's name,

[#52 Dec. 2000] Hakuin Zenji says, "Nembutsu sange shugyoto:" meaning, "In repentance and review of our behavior there is samadhi." There is no religion without repentance and review of our unskillful behavior. No matter what religion, we must always look honestly at our mistakes. Religion is seeking the eternal truth to realize the pure truth and know absolute good.

Looking for Buddha and God is religion. They are not outside or inside us. In all religions the eternal truth is the point. We are incomplete so we search; our lives are not eternal and we are not pure and clear. If we liberate our small selves we become eternal, and we do this with repentance.

In Buddhism we repent the karma from the past; caused by greed anger and ignorance which have brought about this mind and body and all our mistakes that weight upon us. We repent all of these before God and Buddha. We speak them openly and let go of our karma. This is the entrance to deepest faith. In Buddhism we follow the precepts and repent our behavior to the thousand Buddha's of past, present and future. We prostrate for one whole week to repent. There are many ways to repent.

In the Zendo we practice hidden

virtue. We make mistakes and have unclear behavior, so to clear our mind we just do hidden, helpful things such as cleaning the toilet unasked, to mend shared property on your own. We help people without their asking in order to let go of our small self. Our clear mind is moved to repent beyond form. If it is true repentance, honestly looking at ourselves, then our mind will be involved deeply and it will not be empty of commitment. If it is only form without heart, then no matter how many prostrations we do it won't change us. We will repeat our mistakes. But if we only once sincerely repent our behavior with our whole heart we will be freed from that habit. From the origin that which gives rise to these mistaken acts is that we confuse what is real and what is temporary.

Our physical body is not actual, it is not a permanent self. It is a meeting of cause and effect. There is no abiding substance. If we could see this we would not commit crimes, we would not speak badly about others; we would not be negative toward people and bring pain to them.

Our true nature has nothing from the origin, and seeing this we reach the source. We cut away all the confusing obstructions and cannot repeat the same mistakes. This deeply profound and endless life-energy embraces all things without discrimination.

... invoking the Buddha's name ...

Only from this place do we have true security of mind.

To just continue pain and misery stuck in our own way has no meaning. When we understand this and repent and release, we understand God and Buddha and become this totally. There is no two-ness in mind and body. In our deepest mind there is endless samadhi, this is repentance.

Hakuin Zenji says that samadhi brings deep truth. We know that all the practices, "like invoking the Buddha's name, repentance, and spiritual training", are all samadhi. Moral and religious behavior stem from this, and



On the last day of a ninety-day training period, Master Suigan addressed the assembly:

"During this period, I was too kind and spoke too much. How about it, have my eyebrows fallen out? Please, look at my face carefully and see!"

The sutras say that if someone teaches mistaken Dharma, his eyebrows will fall out and he'll plummet into hell. But Suigan's mind wasn't dualistic in that way. Shido Munan Zenji (1603-1676) taught this way too.

He was once visited by an old grandmother who said that every day she chanted the Buddha's name. She

the paths of the contemplative craft are based in this concentration.

Just as the pianist forgets both piano and fingers and just plays, and the actor forgets their own age and embodies the age of the character. All the crafts and arts that people know embody the subtle flavor of this blessed work. Tea, martial arts, flower arranging, archery, and ceremony, all are Zen, all are total absorption.

This samadhi is endless, there is no pride in Zen; there is no marketing of Zen. Such separation is not Zen, Zen is samadhi, letting go of all duality.

inquired if this would guarantee her going to the Pure Land when she died.

Master Shido asked her, "Nembutsu--the chanting of the Buddha's name--when you do it, is there anything in your mind?" She replied, "No, no! I forget everything when I chant!"

"That's it--when you are holding on to nothing at all--that IS the Pure Land. You are already there!"

With those words the grandmother was deeply awakened. As Shido Munan also wrote in a poem, In one straight line our body dies completely, we forget our self and work. That is the Buddha as it is.

repentance,

In the olden days of Japan in times of crisis, famines and plagues, when the Japanese emperor saw the people's suffering, they felt insufficient as they were unable to overcome these catastrophes. They would not only repent for their own behavior to themselves but also publicly to all the people. In 668 the Emperor Tenmu began with his own repentance and also called all of his people to repent. In 744 Shomo Emperor also set up a Yakushi Nyorai temple and he repented his faults saying that he wanted to bring forth healthy era, and made a firm commitment to do so, saying that everyone had to take responsibility. In 767, Emperor Shotoku said to all of the temples in the whole country that all of the people should repent. From that time on repentance ceremonies became very common and people all over the country participated.

The great, twisted karma that we have built up from the ancient past has no beginning, the greed and ignorance and anger that arises from this body and this mouth—I am responsible of all my transgressions and ignorance and right now I repent of these things. In Buddhism there are precepts to guide our behaviour, and when we receive them we always first do a deep repentance to all the thousand Buddhas of the past, the thousand Buddhas of the present and the thousand Buddhas of the future.

That mind which has repented, how shall we then manifest it? This mind that does the repentance has to be looked at. There is the form of the repentance but there is also the repentance beyond the shape, form and ritual of doing repentance. More than the form of the repentance the mind of repentance is the real challenge. As we do the practice of repentance if our mind is not clear it has no meaning. Our mind is already clear from the origin and so we should not have committed mistakes and sins, but without our even knowing it we get twisted and off center and we do things which we are often not even aware of doing.

We do training and zazen, but if it is only the form of zazen, just sitting in that posture, doing only that much is a great mistake. Zazen is to always have a clear mind, to live in our original mind. To be aware and clear in each and every mind moment is training. There is no other Zen than seeing our own mind and clarifying it. If we think we sit for any other reason, zazen becomes very confused and complex. If we say that when we stop sitting our mind goes back to being just as confused as it always was, if that is the kind of zazen we are doing, there is a problem. To clarify our mind is the point of zen and we do it whether we are sitting or not sitting. When we are riding on a train or walking along the road, or at our job,

... *repentance* ...

no matter where we are, we clarify our mind. . It is the most necessary thing for us to do. This is why it is said that sitting is Zen and action is Zen. To know that clear mind that we all are endowed with from the origin, this is Zen. To realize this is to practice.

From morning until night is Zen. To know our mind's ease, and not only on the cushion. It is that idea about zazen that causes problems. It is not for understanding others or solving external problems that we do zazen.

With our Mind we realize the Dharma Body. Since we are Buddha we are extending throughout the whole universe fully and completely and in that mind the Buddha is sitting firmly. We realize and experience that and this is true zazen. Our purified awareness is filling and surging through the whole universe, imagining and creating the whole universe. By letting go of all of our thoughts we discover that the Buddha is our own mind. We don't hold on to anything at all instead we become the universe as it is, this actualization is zazen. Zazen is not thinking about liberating ourselves but letting go of our stuck places and becoming one with the universe. This is how we actually liberate ourselves.

Zazen is the formless repentance. If we want to repent completely, zazen is best. We don't do it by thinking

about it but by letting go of all our own individual thoughts, freeing and releasing so we become that huge expanse of the whole universe. We throw ourselves completely into that becoming.

We let go of all of the mistaken behaviors that we have acquired and realize how they have no real existence at all, that because we thought they were actual we made our problems even greater. We have committed unskillful acts without even realizing it, and at this time we have to truly repent that which we have done. We have to liberate ourselves from doing it again in an actual, real way or we will deepen and make heavier those mistakes and even poison others with this. With repenting and liberating our body and mind and mouth we will make more pain and suffering.

As the the Sixth Patriarch has said, "All things are empty where could this clutter land?" To know that mind free of any murkiness, we have to throw away everything to that final point. If we do this in a half baked way, we just increase the impurities exponentially, and make even more ego strength and mistakes. Repentance is about what we have already done in the past, to look at our behavior in the past and feel sorry about it. But in Buddhism it is not only a question of the past there is also the challenge of the future.

... repentance ...

Everything we do sends ripples to the future, everyone of our mind moments affects the future deeply.

Our way of living, in order to protect it we have made dioxin and freon gas, we have made so many poisons and committed so many sins against the environment. We have to not only repent but to make a firm commitment to not make the same mistakes again. For this reason repentance is not only for repenting the past but also for committing to not doing the same thing in the future. To repent our past behaviour is important, but also of great importance is to say we will not continue this behavior. When we find ourselves repeating the same patterns, not to be vague, excusing ourselves, but to take our responsibility seriously. As it says in Buddhism, we can see clearly how our way of living each day is what builds the way the future becomes, we cannot live foolishly and carelessly for one single day. Even we who are so full of faults, before those mistakes come forth, like a baby prior to its ego and dualistic perception, we have this mind which is prior to any sin, without the tiniest bit of clutter, truly empty of every single thing. Our clearest mind beyond any attachment to a small self, we pierce through to that and realize that always clear mind. This is true repentance, not just the form of repentance, rather to

pierce down through the very root of our murkiness and impurity of mind. We realize this in actuality and this is what satori and kensho is. This is our responsibility as humans and repenting our behavior manifests this best. The ego and its attachments bring forth this mistaken behavior and we go to that place prior to even ego and pierce through it and throw it away realizing the source beyond it. This is prior to the birth of the ego, and here we realize our true home, that place of the Buddha mind, the true base of the Love of God. Manifesting that is true repentance.

We realize our true mind and this is actual repentance. Those great misdeeds that we have done, that we have invented, we cannot actually erase them. With this very body we do kill things and take away their life, we kill other people, and we steal with our body as well. We also act without clarity in our relationships with our partners, we hurt each other and confuse and delude. We also tell lies and twist the truth. We also speak in a meaningless way, we act unskillfully and doing this we confuse people and society. We also have greed, anger and complaining in our minds and with that mind we express it unskillfully. With our mouth and body we deceive people and cause problems for people in the world. Even though we make problems for others that problem won't be changed by us realizing this

... repentance ...

true mind. We are in fact beings of unskillful behavior, so we have to repent and look at what we do clearly and directly.

The actual manifestation and expression of the mind of repentance is the Bodhisattva Mind. We clarify and purify our true state of mind, it brightens, and the now formless repentance becomes our actions. In this way the four vows of the Bodhisattva are actualized. Repentance finally has to be manifested in the fulfillment of the four Bodhisattva vows or it is not the true an actual repentance.

Sentient beings are numberless,
I vow to liberate them.
Desire are inexhaustible, I vow
to put an end to them.

The Dharmas are boundless, I
vow to master them.
The Buddha's way is
unsurpassable, I vow to
become it.

Bodhisattvas offer their whole life to all people, to the whole society. We throw away everything and offer it all up to society and with our deep vow, from our Bodhisattva nature we repent everything we have mistakenly done and from that repentance we then express the truth. We support others and don't put ourselves in first place. In our mind we clarify our essence and then for the first time the words of repentance can be understood inwardly.

and spiritual training, all finally return to the practice of zazen.

Our intent to live a life of benefit to other living beings is often hindered by the anxieties that accompany a mind still not fully settled. Swept along by circumstances, we generate endless thoughts of good and evil, gain and loss, love and hate. This is the nature of samsara—our ordinary existence marked by an unending flow of dualistic thoughts in a mind out of contact with its own essence. The swirl of thoughts pulls us one way and then another, exhausting both body and mind. With our attention constantly directed toward outside matters we're left inwardly anxious and depleted.

The deep angst that results from this way of being can only be resolved through the “merit of the Buddha,” to use the words of the Vimalakīrti Sutra. The Buddha referred to here is not something outside ourselves, but is the inner truth, the essence of wisdom, that is immanent in each of us. Buddhism sees the universe itself as a manifestation of the universal truth of the Buddha, a truth known in Buddhist thought as the dharmakāya (Dharma body). The dharmakāya, in turn, takes form as a living aspiration to liberate all human beings. This ardent aspiration to emancipate others, personified in Buddhism as Amitābha Buddha, is the “merit of the Buddha” spoken of in the *Vimalakīrti Sutra*. It is by opening ourselves to this innate compassion, this urge to awaken all beings both good and evil,

that the constant stream of delusive thoughts at the source of our anxiety comes to an end.

However, this opening cannot be attained through mere conceptual thinking, but must be fostered through the practice of zazen. Bodhidharma described the practice of zazen as follows: “Outwardly cease all attachments; inwardly grasp not with the mind. When your mind is like a wall you will enter the Way.” In other words, let go of all concerns with outside distractions and stop troubling yourself with inner worries that do nothing but generate one agitated thought after another. Turn the mind's eye inward, integrate inside and outside, unify body and spirit, and in this state nourish the inner energy that is the “merit of the Buddha.” This cultivation is not simply mental, but rather a feet-on-the-ground, all-inclusive accumulation of this vital inner force.

When I instruct people in zazen I often compare the process to *inflating a balloon*. Without allowing your attention be drawn away either by external things or internal thoughts, let your entire awareness rest your exhalations, as it is primarily through the exhalations that our inner energy settles in the lower abdomen. Let each and every breath out as far as it will go, then inhale naturally, remaining fully open to and aware of the breath as it shifts from exhalation to

... and spiritual training ...,

inhalation and then from inhalation back to exhalation again. Let no gaps appear in your attention. This is the method of zazen. Full attention is essential, but at the same time it is important to avoid all tension and strain, particularly in the upper body. Strain, which results from attempts to forcibly induce certain states of mind, prevents the natural accumulation of vital force in the lower body beneath the navel. In zazen we must be deeply aware of the natural flow of the body.

With the settling of the body, the breathing, and the mind comes a more fully open awareness. Continuing in this way, the inner energy gradually accumulates, just like a balloon slowly inflating. Finally the lower abdomen feels fully expanded, and the entire body, to the very pores of the skin, is infused with vital energy.

This upwelling vitality steadily replaces any melancholy brought on by our various anxieties, and fills us with a sense of hope and possibility. This is the profound flavor of zazen. To taste it we must remain utterly simple and open—the moment we deliberately try to create it, it is gone. If, however, we carefully attend to each and every breath then our consciousness naturally ripens. Our innate desire to contribute to the wellbeing of society is stimulated, and we're filled with the energy to

accomplish this. Our true aspiration is not for personal happiness but for the liberation of all humankind.

The actual practice of zazen requires some getting used to, both physically and mentally. One can't expect the zazen of a person who is just starting meditation to be the same as that of someone proficient in the training. At first the body resists, particularly in people with no experience of the zazen posture. There is tightness and strain in the breathing, too, and wandering thoughts fill the mind. Because of this many beginners get discouraged and quit. Those who persevere, however, gradually settle into the practice. They find from experience that physical pain causes no injuries and is not something to get overly concerned about as long as one sits correctly. The breath gradually relaxes and opens, and the mind, so scattered and unruly at the start, becomes more still and quiet. It's like training a dog. At first the dog is still unmanageable, running about and sticking its nose into every trash can it sees, so you leash it to keep it under control. Gradually the dog settles down and becomes accustomed to staying close to its master, until in the end it walks calmly by his or her side even when unleashed.

There is an inner revolution that occurs when we shift from seeking

... and spiritual training ...

answers outside to looking inside for fulfillment. Searching outside leads only to further thoughts and confusion, while turning inside and letting go of the thoughts that arise one after another is the true path to resolving our deepest anxieties. The production of thoughts is a type of habit, and thus letting go of thoughts can also become a habit—a habit that gradually dissolves our profound attachment to the process of thinking.

With the natural cessation of compulsive thinking comes the arising of true awareness (*shōnen sōzoku* in Japanese). True awareness is not confined to zazen, but can inform whatever we do, right here, right now, whether it be sitting or working or anything else. With true awareness our usual distracted, scattered consciousness gradually clears and we become vividly present in everything that happens, with our full attention on whatever is there. When working we are totally one with working, when meditating we are totally one with meditating, when eating we are totally one with eating. It is the same whatever we do.

This boundless state of consciousness appears with the stilling of the scattered mind. The liberation from fear that accompanies this is a result, not of reliance on some outside power, but of awakening to the immanent truth of the mind. This is

the essential feature of liberation in Buddhism, and particularly in Zen.

Huineng, the Sixth Patriarch, spoke of “one-practice samadhi” (*ichigyō zanmai*). That is, Pure Land Buddhists persevere their entire lives with *nembutsu* practice, Lotus school believers persevere their entire lives with reciting “Namu Myōhō Renge Kyō,” and Zen practitioners persevere their entire lives with zazen. What Huineng intended by the term “one-practice samadhi” is not entirely clear, but it can be said that an overly literal interpretation of this concept risks binding a person in form and losing sight of Huineng’s true meaning. For example, if one regards zazen as absolute one can end up believing that as long as one remains deeply focused while sitting in the meditation hall one is fulfilling the requirements of one-practice samadhi. If that focus is lost while outside the meditation hall, however, this is not true one-practice samadhi based on *shōnen sōzoku*. The true awareness of *shōnen sōzoku* is something that continues twenty-four hours a day. If you’re just sitting for twenty minutes every now and then or if your practice is confined to sesshin, then the true meaning of zazen will never reveal itself to you.

The “practice” that Huineng refers to when he speaks of “one-practice samadhi” is, in essence, function

... and spiritual training ...,

or activity. If we do not maintain samadhi in the midst of activity, if the mind is wandering here and there and we do not continue our zazen practice while seeing, listening, smelling, tasting, feeling, and thinking, then the practice is not genuine. True awareness must always be present. The *Vimalakirti Sutra* points to this when it refers to “direct mind” (*jikishin*) in the statement, “The direct mind is the place of enlightenment.” The direct mind of which the sutra speaks is a mind that is never stagnant but always flows like pure running water, that is vibrant and clear, and that is immediate in its perception. This is living zazen.

Manora, the twenty-second Indian ancestor, talks of this in his transmission verse:

The mind turns with its
surroundings,
A turning that is truly
profound;
Perceive mind’s nature within
this flow,
And there is neither joy nor
sorrow.

This verse tells us that a vital mind—one that is truly aware—is one that moves as one with this world, standing with the world when it stands, sitting with the world when it sits, walking with the world when

it walks. Moreover, “there is neither joy nor sorrow,” that is, even as the mind sees, hears, smells, and tastes it possesses nothing inside.

The usual habit of the mind is to attach to external objects. Deceived by the outside world, it becomes, in effect, a slave to what it sees and hears. When we are used by the things of the world in this way we lose sight of our own inner presence and truth. This contributes nothing to our true happiness, and has nothing to do with genuine joy and sorrow. For the mind to “possess nothing inside” means that it has dropped its habit of attaching to outside things and is no longer led about by circumstances.

≠A natural, healthy mind free of fixations is like a mirror. Nothing is present in a mirror before a reflected object appears, and nothing remains after the object departs. The object adds nothing to it when it arrives, and subtracts nothing from it when it goes away. No matter what the object is, it leaves the mirror neither cleaner nor dirtier. The immediate perception of the “direct mind” is similar to this. Consciousness functions in this way only when it is in a state of true awareness, open to its own inner truth.

The mind in this state is free of the compulsion to think, but this doesn’t mean that it doesn’t think. People

... and spiritual training ...

often misunderstand this point. To simply shut down the thinking process is a kind of mental blackout. Students occasionally come to me saying, "I'm not thinking!" This is fine if the mind has naturally come to rest in stillness, but if the thought process has simply been suppressed this represents no more than a blanking out of the self and extinguishing of the light of consciousness. This is of no use in everyday life.

It is possible, of course, to stop ordinary thinking through intense concentration practices while one is sitting, like a tightrope walker who focuses solely on what he's doing during the time he's on the rope but returns to his ordinary way of thinking once the act is finished. Zen practice of this type is false, leading to a kind of split life where the mind is silenced during zazen and allowed to wander the rest of the time. The two aspects of life end up unrelated, with the practice not functioning away from the confines of the meditation hall.

Zazen is not a concentrated suppression of thought but rather an awareness so open that does not get caught up in ideas and has no need to think when thinking is unnecessary. In its natural state consciousness is a flowing thing that, like water, goes bad when it stagnates. Analytical thinking may be necessary when considering

something from an academic point of view, but in everyday life it generally gets in the way.

Rather than attempt to suppress the mind's ordinary habit of thinking, the thinking habit must be redirected so that the mind no longer chases after the mental activity that naturally wells up out of the consciousness. As Zen master Linji says, "Don't continue [thoughts] that have already arisen and don't let those that haven't yet arisen be aroused. Just this will be worth far more to you than a ten years' pilgrimage." When you see something, just see it and leave it at that. When you hear something, just hear it and leave it at that. Don't follow after it. Thus when you see a flower, for an instant you perceive it directly, without meditation. You recognize it as a flower, but you don't add thoughts and opinions to this perception.

An accomplished practitioner can be present in this state any time, but in those for whom the habit of thinking is strong it usually requires long training to redirect it. If the right motivation is there, however, the effort is never wasted. When consciousness is not blocked the mind gradually opens to direct perception. Direct perception is not some kind of mystical ability, but simply the original function of consciousness. Consciousness in its

... and spiritual training ...,

natural state perceives, not through the filters of thought or analysis, but immediately (that is, without mediation), like a mirror reflecting an image. If there's a flower there's a flower, just that. If a bird sings a bird sings, just that. If it rains it rains, just that. If the sky clears the sky clears, just that. Nothing need be added. In our everyday existence the need for social relations and other interactions arises, of course, but direct perception is at the foundation. Zazen is the cultivation of the ability to abide and function in this natural state.

Consciousness cannot be described, of course, as it has no form, yet it extends to the ends of the universe. In the words of Linji, "Mind is without form and pervades the ten directions." Our consciousness reaches to whatever it can perceive, even the young galaxies at the edge of the cosmos that modern science now allows us to see. Because consciousness is in essence empty, if we see a star the star appears in our consciousness; if we see the sun the sun appears in our consciousness; if we see a mountain the mountain appears in our consciousness. It is the nature of mind to freely leave and enter the five sense-gates, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching everything in existence and taking in all things just as they are. With the least bit of divisive thought, however, this freely flowing activity

is lost. This is the weak point of our way of life in today's world. Keeping the mirror of our minds free from unnecessary concerns, we must remain open to the direct perception of the world just as it is. This is why we practice zazen.

We are in closest touch with our consciousness in its pure state immediately after sesshin, which is why I always stress to trainees the importance remaining open and aware during this crucial period. Be careful about avoiding distracting thoughts and, even if only for two or three days, take time to interact leisurely with nature, perceiving things as directly as possible. Observe too the workings of your own mind. The true meaning of sesshin lies in this time, when we are most able to take in the world just as it is, free of discriminating thoughts and ideation. In so doing we realize that direct perception expresses the essential nature of mind, and become clearer about how everyday life should be lived.

This is not to say that knowledge and experience should be dismissed, but only that they should not restrict us. We should rely primarily on direct perception, and with that as a basis our knowledge and experience become truly meaningful. Reversing this order transforms knowledge and experience into biases and

... and spiritual training ...,

preconceptions, preventing true awareness. This is particularly true in the realm of human relations. Without awareness, our encounters with others become, in effect, encounters with the preconceived ideas in our minds. This can lead only to our destruction.

We must be very watchful on this

point, carefully bringing ourselves as much as possible into alignment with our essential nature. Our consciousness is at all times capable of directly encountering the world around us. This essence of mind is the mind of the Buddha; our minds and Buddha's mind are one and the same. Nothing could be more precious than this.

Even those who have sat zazen only once will see all karma erased.

Bodhidharma said it very clearly that when we let go of everything that we are attached to externally and let go of all the things that we connect to within, when we are sitting, to forget we are even sitting, and our mind holds on to nothing whatsoever. To not be caught on a self nor on an other. That way of saying it of the sixth patriarch is that, to everything that we perceive externally, we add no extra thoughts of whether it is good or it is bad. That is sitting. And zen is in our mind, to not cling to any of the concerns that our floating there. This

is samadhi. Samadhi is deep, zazen power. When a mirror reflects, the mirror has no intention of what it is now going to reflect. Yet it also has no idea of itself as being empty. Things simply come, are reflected and leave. So it is without receiving any image, which would then be a soiling stain. This is samadhi. Samhadhi is not holding on to anything. This being actualized is samadhi. And we choose sitting as a way to realize this.

[Vimalakirti Sutra commentary ; chapter 5.

Nowhere will they find evil paths, and the Pure Land will not be far away.

[#60 Jan. 2003] The Nembutsu practice founder Shinran Shonin said the same thing. All things becoming Buddha, to have such a dualistic idea is a great mistake. Only to not even think about whether you will be saved or not, to only continue the Nembutsu (repeating of the Buddha's name) completely and totally, that is all there is to do.

“It is said that repeating Nembutsu will give us birth in the pure land but I know nothing of that, nor do I know that it might be something to give us karma to go to hell. I don't know anything about those or about anything whatsoever.” Shinran Shonin who can say it this way is certainly doing it totally. We are told to do the Nembutsu but that kind of repeating of the Nembutsu is actually not so simple and casual. To do it thinking we will get this or that and wondering why we have to do it and wondering what we will get out of it—we all have thoughts like that but there is no true Nembutsu when we are thinking that!

Even in doing the Nembutsu I might fall into hell, as Honen Shonin said, even if I died and went to hell from saying that I will have no regrets whatsoever. It has to be this firm. It is not about doing the Nembutsu and going to heaven, even if we say it and go to hell to not have one single regret. Why is that? Because there is no other practice that I

can do, I cannot do some kind of splendid practice, so going to hell is a given for me, for me there can only be Nembutsu even if it takes me to hell. Because I believe totally in Shinran Shonin's words whether I go to heaven or hell is of no concern. How few can believe this thoroughly and completely! It is not a simple path. Have we truly actualized our Mu to that degree? Zazen is not for developing power of samadhi. Nor is it to become a Buddha nor is it for realizing kensho. These are irrelevant. Doing our Mu will we go to hell or heaven? Will we be enlightened or not? Why do we do this Mu? To throw away everything completely and totally and then it becomes Nembutsu as well.

For those who are left there is only to do the Nembutsu. It is the only path to follow, to become, to do, and to realize; there is nothing but this! We have to be able to realize this, or else we cannot casually say, “Everyday is a good day”. To do one whole week of Osesshin is to demand that of ourselves and sanzen is to get rid of all those ideas of good or bad, to take them all right out from under us. Doing zazen without sanzen, zazen's essence gets distant. Again and again taking it all out from under us until there is nothing whatsoever left to say and there is only that “Mu”, that “Namu shaka muni butsu”. It cannot be done only with our head.

... the Pure Land will not be far away.

Because we still don't become totally serious and we cannot realize it completely. We have to do it totally and completely in this way.

To do it to where we cannot possibly retreat is that world of swallowing down a red hot iron ball, to the right the sea of fire and to the left the hell of water, and there is one small narrow path there that goes on, that continues and that is the path of

the Nembutsu. The Pure Land sect teaches this way and it is the same for our Mu. Continually doing that Mu is the only help we have and when it gets to this point, there is no more division into "self power" and "other power". Only by arriving here can the deepest faith be born. Everything else disappears but this. Then the deep faith is born. Our true life energy is then realized directly and clearly.



[#57 Nov. 2001] An email came from someone which told of a child in America who asked a Native American elder what he thought of this recent tragic incident. The elder responded that in his body there are a white and a black wolf and they are fighting. The child then asked which wolf would win. The elder answered, the one that I feed. This is how he answered.

The reality is that we live in a world full of deep delusion with people conflicting and hurting each other. Even though there is no carpenter

who makes carts of death we build them ourselves and ride in them ourselves. But when we do zazen, at least during those moments, we are free from that twisted karma of moving through the six realms of beings. It is not that some finished paradise appears suddenly but that our clarified mind brings that purified perception to all of our surroundings and that bright light that comes from great faith is born. In our awakening our trust in humans is deeply confirmed and with the liberation of others through that trust, we can all live in a pure and perfect land.

*If we listen even once with open heart
to this truth, then praise it and gladly
embrace it, how much more so then,*

[#62 Dec. 2003] Zen is focused on “Seeing directly and Becoming Buddha.” Directly experience this true root source of all beings, go straight to the true nature of all existence, This is Zen’s truth or it is not Zen and for this we do zazen. Zazen is for this body which is buried by and wound up in egoistic mind and self-centered filters. From right there realize and polish the true Buddha nature. This very form is doing zazen, which is, just as it is, the Buddha’s form. We settle and quiet the mind. Deepening more and more that profound mind becomes clarified. This is the subtle flavor of zazen. In this way people from all over the world who love zazen are doing zazen. Even if they are not only doing zazen, as they become settled and quiet inside then just by sitting the usual everyday turbulence and noise and busy minded thoughts are stilled. We are surprised not having known we have such a quiet mind within, should we really become this settled? How quiet it can become! We feel this way and notice this for the first time, To realize and experience this state of mind is zazen. Even people working so hard in this busy world, if it is someone who has experienced this quiet of mind even a little, then they will wonder if there is not also some way in the midst of that busyness to be in that quiet state of mind.

It is a matter of course to wonder this, And in our busy work and everyday world we have this zazen of one breath. This becomes very necessary, without forcing, we should exhale all the way out to the very end of the exhalation, quietly breathing out to the very most furthest end of the out breath, If we do that, then we can, in that one single breath, separate from everything and in a mere few seconds we can exhale out everything we have been so caught on and let go of all of those stuck places. In this way, right from where we breathe out everything completely a totally new, fresh awareness and state of mind are born. This One Breath Zazen is necessary and there are many who are already making use of this. But if we could resolve it all with one breath that would be fine, but it doesn’t quite all get resolved that simply, with just that.

When we first get up in the morning we can do this, or at work, when we get stuck and don’t know how to move through something. Especially at these times take a moment and five or ten times to exhale out completely. If we actually do this our body will become relaxed and expansive and our state of mind will be pleasant and refreshed. we really feel that all of that staleness and stuckness has been blown away completely. It is very necessary for us to be able to

... listen even once ...

renew and regenerate our state of mind. It is said that the hermits of olden days ate mist to stay alive. No one can just eat mist and stay alive perhaps, but all living beings receive nutrition from the air. Just like plants receive nutrition from the air, when we breathe deeply our state of mind comes back to life and our Ki goes to every corner of our body. As Master Dogen said, "I put myself completely into the Buddha and the Buddha comes completely right to me". When we exhale completely our hardened ego and personal views are no longer defending a small self, we become this state of mind where everything is completely trusted to the Buddha. We breathe out everything, let go of our small-minded stuck places and in

doing that we are able to understand the state of mind of the Buddha.

With this deep, profound state of mind, without any misunderstanding of the world we see, without being stuck, we receive a huge all embracing state of mind, we all have to live in this state of mind. To actualize this state of mind is zazen. We do zazen as part of our everyday process and use it as our everyday refuge. If we do zazen even a little we feel its benefit and want to realize that source. For those who live like this a correct state of mind, a correct way of seeing this world this will be born. Then we can let go of that world of good and bad, gain and loss and are able to be blessed with the direct encounter of our true clear mind.

if on reflecting within ourselves we directly realize Self-nature, giving proof to the truth that Self-nature is no-nature.

It's not clear what exactly happened at Shorinji in China, or when. It's said that it was the ninth of December when Eka wanted to meet Bodhidharma and ask about his Mind, but Bodhidharma ignored Eka and continued his zazen, facing the wall without turning around. As Eka waited, darkness came and snow began to fall. Eventually the snow was

up to Eka's knees, but he remained standing, without moving.

When the night was over Bodhidharma turned and spoke to him for the first time.

"Why are you standing there in the snow?"

Eka begged in tears; "For the

... *Self-nature is no-nature*

Dharma. Great Master, please give me your compassion, open your Dharma gate, and liberate the sentient beings”.

The Buddha’s incomparable teaching, the path of awakening, can’t be taken lightly. It’s attained by diligence in the difficulties of practice and by enduring that which is difficult to endure. You mustn’t care even if you lose your life. You have to do the practice and do things that most people can’t do, to be willing to throw yourself away completely, beyond your imagined potential. Then you can know a tiny bit of that state of mind. It can’t be done with a small mind, conceptual knowledge, or a conceited attitude. If you think you know something, you won’t be able to realize this mind.

Why was Eka carrying a sharp knife? It’s said that he took the knife and cut off his left arm at the elbow. Then he held the bloody arm out to Bodhidharma to show him that he was ready to sacrifice his life. Of course, it can’t be known if this story is literally true, but it’s indicative of the sincere mind with which Eka sought the Way. Not moved by human emotions and dualistic ideas, he expressed the truth.

Then he asked, “May I ask about the enlightenment of all of the Buddhas?”

Bodhidharma answered, “The mysterious subtle Dharma of the Buddhas is not something you can learn about by asking other people. You must inquire within.”

This is a very strict answer. The essence of the Buddha’s awakening is not about knowledge. Thinking you can receive it through information is a big mistake. It’s not something you can understand by just asking and listening. When you’ve completely thrown away your ego and small self, when everything within, every last speck of thought, has been let go of, then for the first time you’ll be able to receive that which surges forth freely from within.

Eka pushed further. “This disciple cannot know any security or repose, please bring peace to my heart.”

He was saying, “I am not in a stable frame of mind; I can’t realize the state of mind of all of the Buddhas and know true peace. If I can’t ask you to tell me the enlightenment of all of the Buddhas, won’t you please relieve that insecurity in my heart so I can know peace?”

Eka had studied Confucianism and Taoism and knew their doctrines exhaustively, but because he still couldn’t realize peace of mind he had traveled a great distance to

... *Self-nature is no-nature*

meet Bodhidharma. How much suffering Eka had been through just to be able to ask this question! Having sought the true Way, he was confused and miserable; having studied philosophy to its ultimate point, he had discovered there was a place where even philosophy couldn't liberate him. He was now standing on the razor's edge. When he finally understood that peace couldn't be found through philosophy and scholarly searching, he could begin.

People talk about the Dharma and the 5,049 sutras, and there are all sorts of philosophies and doctrines in the world, but none will reach this ultimate point. For each and every person, true peace has to be known from the very bottom of the heart. If we can't embrace this place, our struggles in life are without essence. Without true peace, we can't know the essence of the Buddhadharma.

"My mind can find no relief. Please liberate me." It took a depth of experience make this request, and Eka's willingness to put his life on the line is evident here.

"Bring me that mind that can't find relief, and I will pacify it for you."

Bodhidharma wasn't playing with words. He could see that Eka was sincere and desperate in his questions.

Eka had come to the end of what could possibly be said with words, and Bodhidharma saw this clearly and gave the last slash.

Uprooted completely, Eka's essence was crying out. No longer under the influence of his own thoughts and dualistic ideas, he had gone beyond reasoning, beyond any mental concept of a mind as something that can be found by looking for it, and was able to offer it, exactly as it is.

Bodhidharma said, "'Bring me that mind that can't find relief, and I will pacify it for you."

Eka replied, "I can't do that. It can't be found."

Bodhidharma said, "See? I have pacified it."

Eka understood completely.

It isn't there; it is *not there!* If you see this, if you truly understand it, you will know true peace and the end of all doubt. The place where there is not a thing to hold on to, nothing to seek, nothing to clutch: here is true peace. To know the place where nothing can be inserted is to know the truth. There is no room for reasoning and dualism. When Eka received that whole mind just as it is, when he knew directly that "it's right here," he knew that true mind for himself.

This is a very severe encounter

... Self-nature is no-nature

between teacher and student. But compassion courses through it. This has to be seen. This is the birth of one Buddha, the awakening to the deepest truth. Eka sought the truth of Bodhidharma's essence and was willing to offer his arm. That is how

pure one has to be to understand the great teaching of Bodhidharma.

Point directly to Mind,
See your true self and realize
Buddha nature.

We will have gone far beyond idle speculation.

[#62 Dec 2003] "I cannot realize true peace of mind yet, can't you please do something for me?" Niso Eka Daishi asked the Buddha for his teaching with his most sincere true state of Mind and Daruma Daishi answered him quietly. "That mind which can be give peace of mind, please put it out there. I will give you peace of mind.

"After thinking for a while, Niso Eka Daishi said, "Even if you tell me to put it out there, there is no way for me to do that.

Our Mind is not something that can be held or grabbed. If I try, it is nowhere to be found."

Daruma Daishi answered without a pause. "It's not there. Right there. Then isn't that the place of true peace?"

Maybe it could be said that he had

ripened to this point. It was not a game of words. Hearing this one thing, this one wholeheartedly and complete answer, Niso suddenly was completely awakened. He said, "I have received this great peace."

In Buddhism there is no separating from reality with fancies in the air, rational understandings are not played around with. These are called idle speculations. There is no way for such an explanation to even reach here. In just the way that Joshu has said it, we realize the actuality of that state of mind of Mu. There is nothing at all to be held onto whatsoever. We are given this deep understanding, in this state of mind we are able to realize this; separating from any speculation we couldn't do it even if we tried. Then for the very first time we know directly the place of this very place is the land of the lotuses, this very body is the body of the Buddha.

We now know the actual experience where “all sentient beings are essentially Buddhas” truly becomes the experience of “this very place is the land of lotuses and this very body is the body of the Buddha.” This experience and actual essence being realized is the Buddha Nature.

The Sixth Patriarch said, “From the origin there is no single thing”. he saw through it all. This is because in the Diamond Sutra where it is written “Abiding in no place, awakened mind arises.” Hearing that one phrase the Sixth Patriarch deeply awakened. He realized that this mind of no thing at all is what is always in every instant being born anew , again new, again new, again new. We have to believe this. It is not because we have been

storing up things in our Mind for a long time that we can function. Only because of the actuality of the fact that we have nothing in our mind whatsoever, that we can perceive precisely that actuality which is right in front of us then, in accordance with that our functioning comes forth freely. Of course, our experience and creative and inventive efforts and repeated practice have to also be gathered for this, but the source point of that is that we receive and perceive things without any preconceived notions and precisely and exactly perceive what is there. Our mind is that very truth of there is no thing from the origin, from that place of nothing whatsoever, suddenly it transforms freely.



[#76 Nov. 2007] In the old days in China there lived a master named Kiso Zenji. One day he came into the kitchen where the monks were working, if he looked he could see easily what they were doing but anyway he asked them, “What are you doing?”

One monk answered, “We are using the stone mill and making flour”.

There has to be a large thick post

through the middle of the two stones so that they go around and around in the same place and not slide off. Groove to groove, ridge to ridge they contact each other and their friction grinds the grain to a fine powder.

Master Kiso said to them, “Even if you grind the flour don’t grind away that center log.”

Then suddenly he left. These are truly very flavorful words.

In our world everything is always moving and we end up having to move to do things. If there is not one center post that does not move, then everything becomes blind motion and we are moved around by things and not centered.

“Isn’t there something good over here? or over there? This is mistaken! This is true! This is good, This is bad!” cries our ego.

We are always being thrown around by these kinds of ideas when we are without any true central belief. This unawakened movement is but blind movement and is truly pitiful. Lacking a true center, it seems that we are working for society but in fact we are being used by society. No matter what a good things we do if there is no central belief and faith we are just being moved around by circumstances and people’s convenience and that makes it meaningless, or only meaningful for society but otherwise without worth. We cannot know then what our life is meant for, instead our life becomes the life of animals eating feed without the possibility of awakening.

If all one is doing is blind movement that is truly pathetic and more than a majority of acts are only this blind movement. We think that we are doing the moving but in fact it is not based in a value we hold deeply, rather the world around us has given

a value to things and brought it forth into action and movement. If we see the meaning from inside we can find meaning in the action but if it is from the outside, then it is something being put on top of us. We may do fine if the world does not change but if we give up our own values whether for politics, for economics, or for war -for any of these things and then, suddenly our factory or company closes, or our home forecloses and we are confused completely.

On the surface of our mind are emotions which are like the surface of water when the wind is blowing. Whether there is happiness or sadness on the surface, at the very bottom there is a mind that is not moved around by anything. Our state of mind is always changing as our emotions’ change. But when we realize that deep unmovable place we are no longer pushed around even when joy and sadness arise, we are not confused by these changes and emotions.

“The moon in the sky, no matter what strong, chilly wind blows, it is never is blown down by it.”

This is not only about the moon in the sky it is for our mind as well, if we win or lose, if we are praised or insulted, whether we live or die, there is a state of mind that does not get moved around by anything.

The gate of the oneness of cause and effect is thereby opened, and not-two, not-three, straight ahead runs the Way.

The true Buddha Dharma is not divided into many various teaching varieties such as small vehicle, large vehicle, affiliation by hearing, or experiencing, etc. We just need these because our wisdom is still so very distant and unclear. We have to get rid of that ego and for that we speak of the three paths but when we realize that we all are that same wisdom, we see that we are all one true mind at the root. This is what Hakuin has taught with these words.

As the Buddha said that in this world everything is ego expression, dualistic and differentiated. But we cannot be fooled by those dark rain clouds in the sky. Do not be deceived by appearances, instead see that true blue-sky nature, pure and clear with which we are all endowed. We are all liberated from the origin. To lead us to this the Buddha taught us - not by taking us somewhere else but teaching that if we all realize our original mind we will know that we were never deluded in the first place. If we live in this state of mind and open our clear eye to it then,

As the Sixth Patriarch said, "Abiding in no place, awakened mind arises"

Everyday we give birth to many varieties of mind, but these are all abiding somewhere, the place of ego filter, the address of profit and loss,

the location of good and bad. This is why we give rise to a mind moment and a 'me' gets stuck in there and we get opaque, unclear. We get excited about the words we are speaking, We get hot and our ki gets high, our ideas and thoughts get us so excited and we start to think that "nobody is being as badly treated as we are", "no-one can possibly be suffering as much as I am. We get stuck in our mind. In this way our mind is in a location but original mind has no place where it abides. it is not stopped anywhere. What is important about this is to let go of this position that we believe we are in, because we believe we are in a position we get caught on it. We think we are suffering, losing out, miserable, not getting anywhere, and we feel insulted. In our mind originally there is nothing like any of that whatsoever.

We laugh at things that are funny and we are sad when things go badly but there is nothing at all from where this comes forth. From this place of nothing at all these all come forth, and in this way we become one with the world around us when something funny happens we become funny happening, when something sad happens we are born forth as sadness. In this way we are always new and fresh, always new always fresh, this new fresh mind and awareness is the Buddha. We are always wanting this freshness and if we are not fresh our

This dojo of clear, straight-
forward honest mind,
a mind which doesn't
deceive itself.
This is the dojo.

These are famous words often
quoted from the Vimalakiti
sutra as a Zen phrase. The
straightforward honest mind is
the dojo. A clear sincere mind, a
mind that does not deceive itself,
a pure and honest mind. No
matter where we are, no matter
where we go, we cannot separate
from this clear, innocent state of
mind.

*Straightforward mind
is the place of practice*

Jiki shin kore dōjō
直心是道場



... gate of the oneness of cause and effect.

mind is not settled. When we are pulling around things of the past we are not settled. We have to be always fresh, then

“Abiding in no place awakened mind arises”

Without the slightest bit of being caught in our mind, we move and transform, this is our healthy way of being. As the bell goes ‘gong’ we hear ‘gong’, we hear the birds, ‘chirp, chirp’, we become the flower, we become the moon.

We have this actuality with which we are born, this is our awareness, in each moment, every instant our true mind is born. There is only this moment, that is birth and death and so there is no birth or destruction, even to think we are alive at this moment, to have that thought is already a separation. We are alive in each moment we have no room for an idea of being born, of being alive or being dead, there is no such awareness, that is not correct but stopped awareness. When the bell rings “Gong”, awareness is born at that very moment.

That which is nothing at all is “gong” so there is no coming forth or going away, it is only this instant of GOOONG. This world and I are one and the same, without birth, without death. Realize this and we know that true clear mind that is just newly born. IT is not that there is an I that

sees, hears, and thinks, that is the big mistake. There is nothing in my mind at all yet there is seeing, hearing, and speaking.

If you think in your mind there is knowledge or wisdom that you have to understand, that is the big mistake. There is nothing at all in our mind yet there is hearing and seeing and speaking. It is not that there is knowledge in our mind and so we understand, instead we directly perceive there is nothing in our mind at all yet we can see and hear and perceive. We are from the origin empty and unsoiled so there is no birth and no death. We are pure and unsullied, there is nothing from the origin not any idea to be born or to die, no such mental idea. Our mind is empty from the origin no matter what arises, there is no thing to be moved around by and yet we are accustomed and conditioned to moving around in mind. Our mind has originally no shape or form so it cannot be moved around. We think we ARE and so we perceive with that mistaken view, when actually we are in each and every second creating the heavens and earth anew.

Satori is to awaken to that truth of our mind. It is not that there is something to achieve that is satori, but for our mind to always be in its most pure state, this place of nothing whatsoever completely and precisely perceiving directly, reflecting things exactly as

... gate of the oneness of cause and effect.

they are. This is our mind's pure way of being. Because it is not so easy for us to become this way we do zazen. The Sixth Patriarch defined it as, "not adding on any thoughts of good or bad to what we perceive externally, not giving rise to any ideas about what is born forth, not being moved around by anything that comes up within, this is called zazen." We follow this is one instruction to return to our original state of mind. We are always trying to add on ideas of good and bad and gain and loss to the world we perceive. Because we have so many previous experiences and knowledge we color our direct perception with those. Don't color those perceptions! Receive it exactly as it is! To receive it exactly as it is, this is zazen.

Doing zazen is not about us becoming more pure or more quiet or more serene. To even engage a dualistic thought such as pure or quiet or serene is not zazen. Zazen is not to give one thought whatsoever to anything, to give no partner to any thought at all. What comes diving to us, just dives right to us. We do not add on ideas of good or bad or any judgment at all. It is exactly like a mirror that reflects things. To perceive that way is the original Mind of the Buddha. We all think we have to suffer and work hard to become something, That is only a conditioned idea our ego has invented - only egoistic, dualistic thinking. This is not our original Buddha Mind, we all have

Buddha Mind, it doesn't need any of that at all.

"Looking within we are not moved around by anything that comes around whatsoever." A mirror can reflect things because there is nothing in the mirror at all. If we have nothing in our minds whatsoever then our mind is always fresh and new. We can make clear the true value of every thing that we encounter. Not to hold on to anything in your mind whatsoever is the truth. To receive thoroughly whatever comes to us is not about holding on to it. That is not our true mind. When there is the slightest little wisp that comes up, we cut it away. If another mind moment arises, we cut that. If we are still unripe then that cutting is not sharp and we follow right after the thought that comes up. This is why at the beginning we have to make efforts but as it ripens there is not even any need to do that either. We are abiding right smack in nothing at all. That does not mean to stay still there though. This is why we can correctly and precisely receive each and every world that comes forth.

"Looking within we are moved around by nothing that comes." We are just like this and since we still cling and get moved around we have to do zazen.

When our zazen ripens it really becomes "In all the boundless

... gate of the oneness of cause and effect.

realms of space not a single hair can be inserted, from the limitless past through the boundless future we are never separate from the here and now.” We are surging throughout this whole universe, as all the ten thousand things, at one with our perceiving. Subjective with no gap between, no seam at all, that direct perception is what we become, we become the flower, we become the moon, we become the wind, we become the sun, in this way our life

energy is always fresh and always new. It is born fresh and we are not separate in any way from society, we are not separate in anyway from the heavens and earth, we are completely at one. There is no need for some mental explanation that if we do not make efforts we cannot liberate all beings; if it is necessary we will manifest in that way as a matter of course. Each and every mind moment is clear and pure as it manifests and

***Realizing the form of no-form as form,
whether going or returning we cannot be
any place else.***

[#69 Nov. 2005] In China there was a priest named Priest Tokusan. He was famous later as the Master who used his stick like Rinzai used his great shout, he lined up with Rinzai in greatness. At the beginning he studied exhaustively especially the Diamond Sutra and was even nicknamed after that sutra. He was always quoting lines from the Masters, interpreting what they said according to the Diamond Sutra, for example quoting about how we have to “realize Mind directly and become Buddha”, and finally he put all of the volumes of the Diamond Sutra on his back and went on pilgrimage. Going out from deep in the mountains he crossed the

Yangtze River. When he went as far as Beishu there was a tea shop. There was an old woman running the tea shop and he went in for a tea and he asked for a light lunch of mochi. The word for a light lunch is written in Chinese as mind with a dot to the upper side of it. But this was not your regular old woman. She saw him and said “Wow you really have a lot of things piled on your back there” What are all those things you are carrying around with you?”

“These? This is the Diamond Sutra and its interpretation, I wrote it all.”

“Oh ? The Diamond Sutra? I want

... the form of no-form as form ...

to ask you something then. Do you mind? If you can answer my question then your mochi lunch will be free and if not, then please leave right away.”

Priest Tokusan was so full of confidence he said,

“Ask anything. I can tell you anything about the Diamond Sutra.”

She asked, “In the Diamond sutra it says that you cannot grasp the mind of the past you cannot grasp the mind of the present and you cannot grasp the mind of the future. This is what I read there. You said you want to eat a small lunch but what mind do you put that small dot on, is it that past mind, the present mind or the future mind?”

Priest Tokusan swallowed hard but could not answer and after a moment he said “Old lady, you ask something extremely advanced, that is not your own wisdom. From whom did you hear that? Confess!”

The old lady sneered and said that one kilometer from here there is a master named Master Ryotan. “Go there and meet him.”

Priest Tokusan went there, exclaiming, “I finally have found what I left the mountain for! He went to meet Master Ryotan who immediately gave him a question,

a mondo. Master Ryotan said “You don’t even know that you have been drunk down into Ryotan’s gut. Do you really think you can say that you have drunk him down into your own belly? HA!”- really a cannibalistic greeting.

Then he gave him koan after koan and they continued until it was nearly dawn. Master Ryotan finally said he should stop babbling so much mental junk, go to bed and leave tomorrow. It was very dark and there was no need to go tonight. He might as well stay the night and leave tomorrow and so Priest Tokusan went outside but it was so dark, he could not even tell if someone pinched his nose. Priest Tokusan was in trouble, “How can I tell where to go to sleep in this dark!”

“Yes, yes that is a problem.” and Master Ryotan gave him an oil lamp and a light, a torch of paper soaked in oil. He lit it for him and just as Priest Tokusan received it, Master Ryotan blew it right out. Perhaps the karma had ripened but just then Priest Tokusan broke through completely “From now on I will not doubt the words on an old Master who is renowned under the sun.”

We say things we have heard from others, like fire on a paper, when it is blown out suddenly it is useless and gets us nowhere. We have to realize

... the form of no-form as form ...

that which is in our own mind, not what we have read and learned, we have to know it for ourselves or we never know what is confusing or clear. We have to find that light within our own lives, that inextinguishable light.

Formless means to let go of every form. Our mind is empty of form and without ego. The Buddha always taught that we have to let go of an idea of being an ego entity, a personality, a being or a separated individuality. That which is always saying “me! me! me!”; that human conceitedness; that which seeks our future good fortune; and that ignorance of thinking about sentient and not sentient, let go of all that thought as well. We have to right now be born again, born again anew - that freshness of mind, this is our truth.

We have a body but we have no need to think it as ‘my’ body or a ‘me’, our body is society’s tool, to be useful for all people. This life is not for our own self-centered joy but for all people to know joy and to use our body as a tool for this deep joy. We use this tool for realizing our deep vow. This is why we are so glad to have a healthy body, this is a huge joy in itself. Not caught on form, we realize our life and body are aids for all the people in

the society to have meaning. To see our body like that is the mind of the Buddha.

Our mind’s true base is empty of form, and this formless mind’s vessel is actual. But we cannot be stuck on this actuality’s form or our formless mind gets caught on an idea of form. Then flowing water stops flowing. Flowing water does not get rotten, not flowing water gets rotten and ferments and so we have to see this flowing mind as truth, always new, always new, in its every manifestation. Not to get caught on what is stuck, but to always change with this outer world; sleeping, waking - always new, always new. We enjoy this world full of people, together we are in a form but if we are not stuck on that, we become an old person when we meet an old person, we become a young person when we meet a young person, in accordance with the need of each moment we use our body.

We do cleaning and washing, not even sitting down for a moment’s rest to “warm our seat”, but always working while knowing we are never moving at all. See that very clearly and look at it freshly always.

Realizing the thought of no-thought as thought, whether singing or dancing, we are the voice of the Dharma.

[#69 Nov. 2005] Dogen Zenji says about our Original Face,

“In the spring it is the flowers, in the summer it is the meadowlark, in the autumn, it is the moon, in the winter it is the snow.”

We have the springs joy in the flowers joy, the joy of the breeze in the spring, the joy of the colored leaves in the autumn, and then the moons radiance, the snow’s stillness, and when the snow stops falling there is a pure white world. This is each and every day received and we feel our life energy and that is possible because we know mind. We always have flowers blooming but if we do not know them with our deepest mind then there is no great wonder and joy. In the summer there is always a breeze blowing somewhere, but if we have no mind of joy and wonder it is only some wind. The autumns leaves, the brightness of the moon has meaning because we receive it with our mind and the great bright moon makes peoples mind abundant. The pure whiteness of the snow makes us quiet like everything else that is returning to the root. That is possible because we feel the truth of life. This mind, this mind of right now, because of this we know it and becoming one with the world we know this truth and can clarify this. But if we try to grasp this mind in one instant it escapes us. No

one can grasp this mind. The mind, to seek and find it is impossible.

The Sixth Patriarch says that empty of mind-moments is to have a mind-moment without any thoughts of that mind-moment, which means to not think about what is not necessary to be thought about. We need only to think about what needs to be thought about, this is most human. We stop flowing when we think about what we do not need to think about. Of course we have to think of what needs thinking about, but then we keep moving,

As Hakuin Zenji has written about it, while bringing forth mind-moments do not get caught on any mind-moment, laugh and laugh and laugh; go and go and go; and speak and speak and speak, this the functioning of a healthy mind. While having mind-moments do not be caught on them. Nor does this mean to be like a tree or a rock or non-feeling.

Yet we are also unlocatable, we are flowing and not stopping. To be flowing is our true nature our true way of being. But an ignorant person’s mind stops moving and gets like frozen water or ice. Stop moving we become like ice and ferment, but flowing water does not freeze or ferment. If we get stagnant we get fixed and only think about ourselves.

... the thought of no-thought ...

To flow is the true nature of water and for us to flow is our true way of being. We always flow and are not stopped in one place or our mind gets stuck and rotten.

For as long as we are human we have to see clearly what is good and bad and this is Buddha Nature but if we get stuck on good or bad we get rotten and stagnate. We see good and let it flow we see bad and we flow, or else good is no longer good and bad becomes worse and worse. Beautiful is beautiful and ugly is ugly, we see this as a matter of course. To not get stuck on those, not caught on good or we think we are absolutely right. Nor can we get caught on bad or we get accusative and absolutely sure and caught by that. Nor can we get caught on what is beautiful as good or bad and then caught on resentment. We cannot get caught on what is too intimate or we get hostile, we cannot get stopped or fixed or unflowing. Our mind is always flowing along, flowing along and flowing along, that is our minds way of being. We are humans so we cannot do things always completely, and incomplete is also fine, then we go beyond and let go, let go and go beyond. In this way it is like a photo of one instant or it becomes as if the shutter is double exposed we cannot see clearly because there are two photos that cannot be differentiated. Our finished things have to be left to the past and there is no way to try to catch those or it makes our mind confused, Each

mind moment, each mind moment, our awareness is born anew, flowing like the flowing water, everything flows like time flows. If our awareness does not flow it goes backwards to the past and that is not correct. Always new awareness, meeting people anew and that makes relationships full and fulfilling.

The Sixth Patriarch says that this mind working correctly is zazen. This is how he taught it, and and it is not about clenching our teeth and saying “not to think anything not to think anything”, this is not zazen.

To have no mind-moments polluted with extra thinking is to be empty minded, to have no “I” and no form to be caught on, is to be empty of form. To be flowing always like clear water, never fixed or stagnating is to be without location.

We always want to have an appearance, whether as a boss of a company, as a teacher or as a man or as a woman or as a good person or as a bad person. There are many possible forms but to not be caught on that is to be formless.

This “Even those who have sat zazen only once will see all karma erased.” as Hakuin has said, this is samadhi, this samadhi is also called “to receive correctly”. To receive correctly is one of the five perceptions in the Heart Sutra. To see or perceive, we have eyes and we see color with them

... the thought of no-thought ...

and we hear voices with our ears
and smell fragrances with our nose.
and feel tastes with our mouth and
know hot and cold with our mind.
We understand hot and cold and
pain and sadness, we have the roots
to receive each of each of these.
To perceive is to receive and this is
usually considered to dirty our mind.
Yet, when we receive feelings and are
caught on them that is our own fault
and not the problem of that which is
perceived as unclean. That becomes
pollution of our mind. To perceive
and not add on is correct and that is
also the correct receiving of things.
That mind of perception without
obstruction is the purity of the six
roots of perception. We sit in front
of our desk and hear the clock but as
we become absorbed in our reading
we no longer hear that clock. That is
the correct way of receiving that clock
. But if we start thinking about the
picnic last Sunday, that is not samadhi
of reading but is incorrect reception.
In this way in each situation we
concentrate and do not get distracted
and our practice works efficiently and
is well fulfilled and we can know the
samadhi of fishing, we can know the
samadhi of haiku or music. There are
many kind of samadhi when our mind
concentrates continually as the Sixth
Patriarch said

“ ‘za’ is to externally bring up no
thoughts to what we perceive and
‘zen’ is to internally to be unmoved by
anything within.”

He said it so well with this definition.
To become it completely and not
even be aware of becoming it is ‘za’
and not to be upset by anything is
‘zen’ definition. So in the dojo we
are always teaching ‘to become it
completely’. We all have various
histories and experience joy and anger
and pleasure. We have these thoughts
infinitely and boundlessly and from
the old days people would purify and
clarify by doing various ‘arts of the
way’, doing Kyudo as if it is the very
last arrow in our whole life, and in tea
ceremony using “One meeting, One
opportunity”, but finally the zazen
path is what has to be experienced.

In the Meiji era lived a famous
swordsman Yamaoka Tesshu who
from a young age realized that
swordsmanship and Zen were one
and the same path. He then met the
great swordsman Asari Masayoshi
and whenever he met Asari, Asari
felt so big, Tesshu got the feeling that
Asari was so big that he could not
move. He did not know what to do
and he realized it was not technique
but mind which had to change. He
went to Zen Master Tekisui and
really went to sit with his life on the
line. The koan he was given is from
the Five Ranks [Arrival at Mutual
Integration]:

Once two blades cross points,
Retreat is no longer possible.
Rather, the adept then is
Like lotus blooming in fire,

... the thought of no-thought ...

Only the adept reaches this wonderful place.

Every time he went to sanzen with Tekisui, Master Tekisui hit him on the head. One of his strong students said that Yamaoka Tesshu, his good friend, could not be hit like that, he was his teacher. He kept following Master Tekisui around to kill him but could not kill Tekisui, because, as Tekisui said, "am I the kind of priest that you could catch and kill?"

Whenever he would wake up Yamaoka Tessho would hold his tobacco pipe like a sword. His wife was so upset that he would soon go crazy that she went to Master Tekisui to ask him to help but he said he could not. For three years Yamaoka Tessho continued then he was deeply awakened. He waited for dawn to go to Rinshoin where Tekisui was staying and he went in to see him. They only had to see each others faces, then they both laughed and since the hot water was not boiled yet he left and went to Asari's gate. He did not get moved around by his form at all and finally Asari gave up and said "You are not my opponent" and named him his successor as Kenzen master of the Ittoryu.

" 'za' is to externally bring up no

thoughts to what we perceive and 'zen' is to internally to be unmoved by anything within."

This is important in all the aspects of life, not to be caught on the audience in Butoh dance, or with driving, when the wheel is in our hands even if the children are doing marathon and the house needs cleaning we cannot let go of our attention. Also in the bath or eating, wherever we are, to not let go of our concentration is to not let go of our path. This is the way of success of our path, the refining of our samadhi, and this is the base of our path more than anything else.

Here we have the Buddhas and Patriarchs true zazen which is samadhi. This means to open the windows of our mind and realize samadhi, in our mind we are always meeting the world and all the various worlds. We encounter them by being one with them, that is zazen.

"Realizing the form of no-form as form, whether going or returning we cannot be any place else. Realizing the thought of no-thought as thought, whether singing or dancing, we are the voice of the Dharma."

This is the ultimate state of mind for which the entrance is zazen.

*How vast and wide the unobstructed sky
of samadhi!*

*How bright and clear the perfect
moonlight of the Fourfold Wisdom!*

They are the Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom, the Universal Nature Wisdom, the Marvelous Observing Wisdom, and the Perfecting-of-Action Wisdom. These are the four aspects of the inherent Prajna of the One Mind.

If we add on mental understanding, we always get into division and individual views. But prior to that mental understanding we can feel it directly. To once actually experience the place where there is no discrimination, no differences at all, with our simple, open mind, and then we can know clearly these Four Great Wisdoms: the Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom, with which all of the 6.3 billion people are endowed. Like that huge, great sky before there was ever any judgment: is is the Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom. And then from there comes the Universal Nature Wisdom:

We see beyond any differences—the eyes that see all as one and equal, the direct perception that comes prior to seeing any differences, where there's no difference between good health and bad health, rich or poor—to see this one equal mind before any awareness comes forth at all, where everyone exists equally. Which then brings us to the Mysterious, Observing Wisdom: Next we put a

spotlight on each and every one. How is this person suffering? In what way? What flower is this? What grass is that? What bird is this? With each one in its own way we can mysteriously observe all of its differences. And finally, the Perfecting of Action Wisdom: Knowing these differences, perceiving them, we then, to whatever comes to us, respond immediately. We know exactly how to respond to whatever comes with our eyes, our body and our hands—all of these functions are Perfecting of Action Wisdom. And we can function with a high quality.

We know these four Wisdoms: the Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom, the Universal Nature Wisdom, the Mysterious Observing Wisdom, the Perfecting of Action Wisdom. We polish these four Wisdoms with zazen. It's not about becoming dark, but about becoming more and more full of light, and to know these Four Wisdoms limitlessly we have zazen. [Sixth Patriarch V3, chapter 7]

The basis of the Buddha is these Four Great Wisdoms. The first is the Perfect Mirror Wisdom. The entire universe is a great, perfect, mirror. is wisdom is that which singularly reflects everything exactly as is. is boundless universe's immeasurable

... How vast and wide ...

mirror—we all have this wisdom within us; it is not about a separate Buddha. is great space which has been explored by science, all of it is right within our very own mind. All of the intimately close galaxies, the far galaxies, the furthest clouds of stars—the further we discover, the more our mind expands, like the computer's functioning as well. We know this Perfect Mirror Wisdom.

Thus the Perfect Mirror Wisdom is our mind's base substance. ere is no physical mentation here nor is there any ego; these are all born forth from here, from this great source. For what do we

do zazen? To realize this source directly in our experience, we sit. Yet if we stay conceptual or keep judging things good or bad or feel good about an experience we're having or bad about an experience not continuing, that is because we have not yet touched the actual source yet. Like a Pacific breeze making shallow waves on the surface of the ocean, these have no effect on the ocean's deepest bottom. We do zazen to experience deeply that which is prior to judgment, prior to ideas about and ideas which concern something good or bad.

The second of the Four Wisdoms is the Universal Nature Wisdom. Because we always sustain a

position of a self, we are unable to see everything as truly equal. But if we look at how a newborn baby perceives, of course it has its genetic makeup but it has no preconceived notions of perception. Our adult mind becomes purified like that and then we are able to perceive directly without differentiation and judgment entering into what we perceive. We can see everything directly, prior to any influence from perceptions and mental judgements, ideas of good or bad. is perceiving directly is the Universal Nature Wisdom. is wisdom sees a tall mountain or a small rock in exactly the same way, prior to any concern of whether something is big or small or red or green; it simply directly perceives it prior to any judgment. When we do zazen and purify our mind we can realize this state of mind where there's no labeling of things or people or seeing of things in a relative way in any way that we can fall into discrimination. We are free from being swayed.

Perceiving the world only equally, we clearly see one way but we miss the intrinsic differences of each and every thing: a particular character of a flower, a particular way of being of a tree. Each and every person and thing has a story, an individual nature. Not to see this with a judging, discriminative eye, but to put a spotlight on each thing's particular detail, like science examining

... How vast and wide ...

precisely the world of microns. is is the world of the Mysterious Observing Wisdom. ere can be no mental operations allowed in here, or it is not the Mysterious Observing Wisdom. ere are many kinds of people, races, histories, cultures. If we only give our own version of a avor to our perceptions, then we cannot call it the Mysterious Observing Wisdom.

The fourth of the Wisdoms is the Perfecting of Action Wisdom. Our eyes see and our ears hear, our hands create things, our feet carry us; we all have these capabilities and can use them without anyone ever teaching us how. No baby who is not visually handicapped has to be taught by a mother how to see, nor does a baby who is able to hear have to be taught by its mother how to hear—or taste, or to feel with its body or to have its hands grab at things or to have its feet carry it. We never have to be given lessons in these things; we are born with the knowledge of how to use these things. is is the Perfecting of Action Wisdom. We say this is a matter of course, but if we live and feel, perceive, walk, and create from a position of a small self with an ego filter that is not the Perfecting of Action Wisdom. It has to be free from any concepts or ideas coming from mental perceptions. [Sixth Patriarch V3, chapter 7] Know that these Four Wisdoms—the Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom, the Universal

Nature Wisdom, the Mysterious Observing Wisdom, the Perfecting of Action Wisdom—are our original state of mind, they are not something to find externally. Vairocana Buddha is not somewhere else. Our very mind as it is, is the Dharmakaya, the Sambhogakaya, the Nirmanakaya, and manifests the four wisdoms: the Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom, the Universal Nature Wisdom, the Mysterious Observing Wisdom, the Perfecting of Action Wisdom.”

When our mind is silent we see from the origin the Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom, we can see mountains and rivers and all things as equal. We can know the Mysterious Observing Wisdom and see that it is right inside of us and it perceives everything. Also we have in us the Perfecting of Action Wisdom, we know whatever needs to be done, no matter how challenging and difficult, we can do it and how it has to be done as well. These Three Bodies and Four Wisdoms are our true base. Many names, but the same mind, which expresses as many different things: a mirror and a perception of things as equal and also as its functioning in every encounter. This is our truth and we have to see it within from our own experience.

If we look at how things are in society we can see all the many needs. We don't come to have these Wisdoms from training; we have always been

... How vast and wide ...

endowed with them. If we are always holding important our zazen, we do not need to hold onto their names and their definitions. They will all be revealed freely and expressed as they are needed.

How to use this wisdom is what koans teach us. These Four Wisdoms are clarified by these koans. But above everything else, first we have to realize this Perfect Mirror Wisdom and know the functioning of the Dharmakaya. We polish this Wisdom of the Perfect Mirror Wisdom with that koan of Joshu's Mu [Gateless Gate, case 1]. The Universal Nature Wisdom we

polish with Tozan's koan of the three pounds of flax [Blue Cliff, case 12]. The Mysterious Observing Wisdom we polish with Hyakujo's koan of the fox [Gateless Gate, case 2]. The Perfecting of Action Wisdom is polished with the koan of Shuzan's Shippei [Gateless Gate, case 43]. The various expressions of the ancients' wisdom we polish with these koans. The basis of all of this has to be held precious to be able to see what exactly can be done for the liberation of all beings.

[Platform Sutra. V3. p. 94]

At this moment what more need we seek?

The very mind which is doing the seeking, is, as it is, paradise. We are the realization of this. We thought there was somewhere else to go for this paradise, some Buddha waiting across a river from us but it isn't like that after all, that there was always this shore only. If we open our eyes and look, this very place is that. The great lack of faith, the many conflicts of our limited world are like this looking for another shore. But, in this limited world, in this unsatisfactory, insufficient world, if we open our eye of wisdom then right here, there and everywhere is the Truth and holding the infinite truth we are given this

deep understanding. This great joy is the meaning of the Song of Zazen. We are not seeking some promised land or deep understanding from someone "over there". If we open our eye of Prajna wisdom. our eye of deepest truth then this insufficient world we realize is plentiful, sufficient and perfect. The incomplete world, as it is, is complete. This is the truth which will liberate us and through which we will become fulfilled.

Rinzai Zenji, before he came to Obaku's mountain, exhaustively studied the sutras. He realized that they were only prescriptions for

... *At this moment* ...

medicine not the medicine itself, he realized that they could not bring one peace of mind itself. For this reason in that Tang Dynasty, he went to the most advanced teacher of the greatest Path, Master Obaku, and with Master Obaku he trained for three years cutting, cutting, cutting, cutting his mind's true source, digging and digging and digging continuously. That priority of training is described as straight-forward honest and without any doubt at all. His senior disciple Bokuju saw his very honest way of training and he asked him how long he had been at that dojo. "Three years" Have you done sanzen during those three years? "I don't know what to ask." For Rinzai Zenji his whole practice was negating his small self completely, that was everything. About what would someone ask if they were working only on internally extinguishing their ego, continuously. "I don't even know what to ask." Bokuju said to him to ask about the essence of Buddha's enlightenment, not the 5048 sutras but the essence of that which cannot be put into the sutras. He went and asked him and before he was finished he was hit 20 blows. Rinzai had done exactly as he was told to do, where had he gone wrong that he should be beaten 20 times? Why was he hit? What had happened? He couldn't understand at all and after being hit so hard his mind was completely blank, When he came back like this his older brother disciple was waiting for him

and asked him "How was it?" Rinzai answered that he had done as he was told and before the words were even out of his mouth he had been hit 20 blows. "Go back again".

Being told this, since he was such an honest monk, he once again went back in to question Obaku, He was again hit 20 times and he went and repeated his question three times and all three times he was hit. With this Rinzai Zenji felt he had had enough, that someone who is like me can't do this rough path. It seems my mind will never open. I must go somewhere else where even someone like me can work. He spoke to Bokujo honestly in this way.

Bokujo said to him, I understand. If you say that there is nothing that can be done about it. But still you have to go once more and do your parting greetings to the Master, just do that and then go so Rinzai Zenji went to do greetings to Master Obaku, Ahead of Rinzai's arrival at Master Obaku, Bokuji had gone in and spoken to Master Obaku. "That young monk will without fail be useful for others in the future, A person of great value, That monk should not be wasted. Please guide him well in the path of awakening. Please aid him. Having said this when Rinzai came to do greeting to Master Obaku, he said to Rinzai:" There is nothing to be done about your leaving this mountain, but don't go anywhere else, I have a friend

... *At this moment* ...

Master Taegu only go to his place. If you go there without fail he will say something to you of great essence. On hearing this exactly as he was told Rinzai went to the place of Master Taegu.

“Where did you come from?”

“Yes. I came from the place of Master Obaku.”

“What did Master Obaku teach you?”

Rinzai told him what he had done and asked him, ‘I asked the same question three times and was hit like this, Where was I mistaken?’”

When he asked Master Taegu in this way Master Taegu said “What an incredibly kind man that Master Obaku is! I didn’t know he was that kind a man! To teach you that kindly! He actually hit you three times-how very, very kind!”

At hearing these words suddenly Rinzai understood. He had thought that Obaku was hitting him because he had been mistaken, and now, for the first time he realized that was not the case. Master Obaku with his whole being and ki had hit Rinzai, becoming the mind of the Buddha with his clear mind and without a single extraneous thought, had completely hit Rinzai. Rinzai having

been hit like that could not even think or judge, and that mind that could not think or judge, that very mind, that very instant when he was hit, that moments state of mind that no one had ever taught him, that he had never heard of from anyone else, THAT very state of mind was the true essence of awakening, wasn’t it? He finally understood. For the first time at Taegu’s words Rinzai understood what Master Obaku had done.

“So is that all there is to Obaku’s teaching? I thought there was so much more to Obaku, but is that all there is? So Obaku was this kind of priest!” said Rinzai.

We feel hot, we feel cold, we feel pain, we hear a song of a bird going ‘chu chu’ and that very awareness that very most direct perception that very mind is the Buddha’s awakened mind, our true mind. He understood this and that this is true not because we train but because we have this from birth. We are all originally endowed with it. But to this originally clear mind we add good and bad, understanding and ignorance and with these we dirty the clear mind. So that is the true mind prior to ego! so this is what that is. From morning to night we live in this state of mind, and he had been give the deep understanding of this.

*As the eternal tranquillity of Truth
reveals itself to us, this very place is the
Land of Lotuses and this very body is the
body of the Buddha.*

This world comes forthright in front of our eyes and we are born anew in each moment with the awareness that is born. We become joy and we become sadness, we become angry and we become happy, we become clear weather and rain and cloudy weather and storms, too. We are not something that is fixed and decided, we are born fresh and new and in truth in each and every new moment.

In the Tang dynasty, there was a Zen master named Joshu who was asked by a monk about why Daruma Daishi came from India to China. Master Joshu answered, “The oak tree in the garden.”

It seemed as if his answer didn't make any sense and had nothing to do with the question, but as one European put it, “Suffering is the division of awareness into two.” If Daruma Daishi was sad to leave India, or was planning to save the deluded people in China or worried about going to another country where the weather and climate was so different or was worrying about how to make money to live there, if there was any such bifurcation of awareness or any struggle there, even if it was only a tiny bit of dualistic thinking and separation, then truly he would not have been able to save even himself.

Then again, if he had no intention, why would he travel for three years to come so far? Why would he leave India and go as far as China? He wouldn't do that without any intention at all. So did Daruma Daishi have an intention or not? If he did have such a dualistic intention, it was the intention with no intention, the empty-minded awareness. This is only brought forth in one moment with nothing else attached to it. This seems so complicated but the natural world teaches us the conclusion to it.

People are called thinking legs, but really we are legs that don't think at all. The flowers and trees in the garden, is there intention in them—or is there no intention in them? If there is no intention, then how do they bring forth the flowers in spring and why are the flowers a particular color? In front of me right now there are two magnificent lotus flowers blooming; one pure white and the other bright pink. If there is no intention there, how do these flowers come forth? Without mistake, they bloom every year at the same time. However, unlike a human, they have no feelings or consciousness.

How do they bloom so beautifully and regularly? If we say there is a deep profound awareness there, and

... the eternal tranquillity of Truth ...

this is how it makes us feel, then the question arises whether or not there is a great awareness in the universe. Of course, there is no human character and dualistic understanding in the universe, but we cannot help but feel a greater, huge awareness moving through all beings. Or is it just coincidence? Can we settle for that as an answer?

That which evolves and becomes ever more perfect and developed – where is its ending point? It feels as if it is all moving toward becoming Buddha. It seems that all is moving in the universe to become Buddha and the universe is already Buddha and all beings are already endowed with Buddha life. Doesn't one naturally come to see it and think about it in that way?

“The willow is the true form of the Bodhisattva of Compassion, The pine wind's song is the melodious voice of the Buddha.”

If we look at it this way, we see that desires are our Buddha nature and that our form is the form of the Buddha. We are thinking that we are indeed like this but cannot actualize it. This is because we are so full of dualistic thinking, attachments, and deluded views. In letting go of all of those, we will find our way of peace. Throwing away extra thoughts and attachments and entrusting to great

nature, this is the way of zazen. If we look at it this way, we can see that young people even more than adults, children even more than young people, and babies above everyone else, are already this way.

And as Ikkyu says it, “As a baby gets further and further away from birth, it goes further and further away from being Buddha – how sad this is!”

When the monk asked what was the intention of Daruma when coming to China, Joshu answered, “The oak [juniper] tree in the garden.”

Throwing it all away and becoming the mind of the universe, Daruma was like a living, breathing Buddha statue. This is what Joshu was saying when he answered with the response, “The oak tree in the garden.” Is it not the same thing?

When we throw away and let go of all our unnecessary thoughts and attachments, for the first time we can know this state of mind of Daruma Daishi. Daruma Daishi went so far to China and had an exchange with Emperor Wu. Since the emperor was not ripe yet, Daruma left and crossed the Yangtze River. He went to the country of Gi to the Shorin temple on Bear Ears Mountain and sat in a cave for nine years. His very form was like a mountain or an ancient tree – an old pine or oak tree. Yet during

those nine years, he did no translating and gave no talks, he only sat there silently, alone, doing zazen. This was the greatest example and teaching of Buddhism in China at that time. It is still functioning today, liberating beings. There is no mistake in calling this a true miracle. This was Daruma Daishi's living by empty-minded awareness. He lived in the single nen of the life energy of the universe. Training and training, he let go of all of humans' small-minded stains and dualism.'

*See your true self
and realize
Buddha nature*
Kenshō jōbutsu
見性成佛



To meditate means to realize inwardly the imperturbability of the Essence of Mind. This is the very center, where there is nothing whatsoever. We have to come directly to this, not being lax or wandering around in our thoughts. We have to return here, where is no doubt or confusion.

Then we will easily recognize our Face Before Our Parents Were Born no matter where we see it. Without fail if we see our own original, clear Mind, then even if we are in a busy, chaotic downtown we don't mistake it.

When we get home and relax and we're so glad because it is our home; we can settle so comfortably. We have to be able to pierce through that and find freedom going beyond that.

Realize inwardly the imperturbability

of the Essence of Mind, where we are not moved around by anything.

Rinzai Zenji says, In this five-foot lump of red flesh there is a True person of no rank, always coming in and going out of the orifices; if you have not seen it yet, see it now. In this, the True person of no rank is the central point—always coming and going. If it manifests externally, what is its Essence internally? What is it that comes and goes?

While we may have to start out with a mental understanding and a definition, it will not fulfill us and bring us to its true realization. Zazen must be done. Loosing track of any sense of a body, dropping any idea of anything whatsoever. This is living zazen.

[Platform Sutra 2010,p.67]

The Original True Face

Honrai no shin Menmoku

本来真面目

天下第一福



The Six Paramitas

We have the six paramitas, the practices of deepest wisdom, beginning with that of charity, of observing the precepts, patience, not saying and doing whatever we feel like but to realize our goal and hold on to deep endurance and perseverance, and then there are the good efforts, to not stop and actually complete our deepest resolution and in this way we learn to let go of our small minded views. Not seeing this personally, but to perceive exactly as it is. Next we have the paramita of samadhi where we let go of all division between self and others. By doing these we know this direct all-embracing perception of deepest samadhi.

We do a great cleaning of our mind and from that clarified mind we then see directly. What we judged before as good or bad we now can see just as it is, seeing it clearly, seeing it directly, and then we know this is how things actually are. Not from our own personal opinion but from direct seeing.

This is the practice of the Maka Shikan. Maka means that great, all-embracing, hugeness, Shikan is the samadhi of direct perception and wisdom. The Tian Tai Maka Shikan way was developed from the Lotus Sutra and taught people how to be liberated.

When Yoka Genkaku Zenji was

young he studied the sutras, the precepts and the doctrines to be able to know how to understand and live according to the Buddha's meaning. At that time, people who wanted to study Buddhism would become scholars, and they would intellectually study the ways of Buddhism but that never was sufficient. As Rinzai Zenji has said, this is nothing but reading the instructions on the medicine bottle when trying to cure a sickness.

One day while reading the Vimalakirti Sutra, Yoka Genkaku Zenji deeply saw the essential meaning, however he travelled to meet the Sixth Patriarch and received confirmation of his awakening. Yoka Genkaku Zenji incorporated Maka Shikan in everything he wrote and taught. Later Hakuin Zenji thoroughly worked on this same way of training.

In the Song of Enlightenment, Yoka Gengaku Zenji has written:

Have you not seen the idle man
of Tao who has nothing to
learn and nothing to do,
Who neither discards
wandering thoughts nor seeks
the truth?
The real nature of ignorance is
Buddha-nature;
The illusory empty body is the
Dharma body.

After realizing the Dharma
body, there is not a thing;
Original self nature is the
innate Buddha.
The five skandas--the empty
comings and goings of floating
clouds;
The three poisons--the vacant
appearing and disappearing of
water bubbles.

When the real is experienced,
there is neither person nor
dharma.
In an instant the avici karma is
destroyed.
If I lie to deceive sentient
beings,
May my tongue be ripped out
for kalpas uncountable as dust
and sand.

With sudden enlightenment to
Tathagata Ch'an,
The six paramitas and myriad
means are complete within
that essence.
In dreams there are clearly six
paths of sentient beings;
Upon awakening the great
chiliocosm is completely
empty.

There is no sin or merit, no loss
or gain.
Don't look for anything in this
Nirvanic nature.

Generosity

The first wise aspect of following
the path is generosity, or giving alms
and donations. Offerings can be
of material value or of the Dharma

teaching. The Bodhisattva who
devotes life energy to practice shares
the spiritual fruits of these efforts
with others, while the Bodhisattvas
living in society support others
through material offerings. The
Buddha taught clearly about this
in his own time. It has endured
as an important basic teaching of
Buddhism. This means not only
giving to a few people around you,
but to share open-heartedly with all
beings. The more we are ready to
give the teaching, the more people
around us are also ready to receive.
Nowadays, it has become difficult
because people are so concerned with
protecting themselves. That is why
giving alms is so important.

There was an old couple living in a
village. Their pantry was completely
empty, so they sold some of their
firewood in exchange for four cups
of rice. When Chikuren Choja came
by asking for alms, the grandmother
gave him one cup of rice. Soon
following him were Mokuren and
Sharihotsu, to whom she gave one
cup each. She was sure one cup of rice
would be enough for herself and her
husband for a few days. Then she saw
the Buddha coming along the road,
gathering alms. She gave him a cup
of rice. Watching him walk away, she
realized that she had given him her
last cup of rice. When her husband
returned, she apologized, saying
she had made a big mistake. But her
husband praised her for giving these
offerings. He checked the storehouse
and to their surprise, it was filled with
all kinds of food and treasures. This
is not the story of a miracle. The old

couple found spiritual wealth in the storehouse. Even without material wealth, spiritual wealth can still be found. The old couple were deeply satisfied in their hearts.

Wisdom and happiness are closely connected. It is said that if you have realized complete wisdom, you will not lack for anything material. This means that if humans realize their inherent wisdom, then all their material needs will be provided for. It can be said that people become spiritually impoverished when they grow too attached to their material possessions. If we all were completely ready to share, there would be no material poverty on this planet.

The Buddha taught that there are seven ways to make non-material gifts to others. First, to see people with a cool, clear eye, thus offering that clarity to others. Speaking kind words is the second way. Saying thank you, giving each other encouragement, expressing feeling for another person... these are true gifts. An open, kind face touches other people with joy when they see it. A warm heart is the best gift to create a warm society. To give the body, as the Buddha did in a past life, offering his own body as food to a hungry tigress who had to feed her cubs. We do not have to go that far, but we can give our bodies by working for others, giving physical effort. You can give a traveler a place to sleep for a night or give away your own seat for someone else to rest. It has become a matter of course these days to give away your seat in a

bus or on a train to an old person or someone in need.

These are the seven ways to give without money or materials. These are called the Seven Immaterial Ways of Giving.

In the 28th generation after the Buddha, Bodhidharuma was the first Patriarch in China. 1500 years ago, he left India, traveled for three years over the Sea of Bengal and crossed over to China. At that time, China was divided into north and south, Ryo in the south and Ki in the north. The emperor in the south believed deeply in Buddhism and was a great scholar. He supported many monks and nuns, and many monasteries. When he heard that a great saint was coming from India, he quickly went to greet him. "Osho, which sutras of thanks did you bring along? Will you teach me?" Bodhidharuma answered, "Only I came, bringing no sutra." The emperor was surprised. "I build temples, translate sutras, support monks and nuns, make Buddha statues. What is my virtue? The people call me the Buddha Mind Emperor. Have I gathered any virtue?" "No virtue." It was a moment of strict greeting.

The emperor got lost in Bodhidharuma's expansive mind; they were on different levels. The emperor cooled down a bit. "No thankfulness for translating sutras or building monasteries? So... what are you thankful for in the Buddhist teaching?" The emperor had calmed down quite a bit. Bodhidharuma

answered with a cold face, “Nothing to be thankful for. Things as they are—no need to be thankful.” The emperor was drawn more and more into a world he didn’t know anything about. “If there is nothing to be thankful for, then what are you thankful for?” “I don’t know.” That was the beautiful end of their conversation.

Bodhidharuma left in a small boat, went to the mountains of Suzan, sat nine years facing the wall, and raised his disciple Niso Eka Daishi. From there came Bodhidharuma’s famous words “Outside, let go of all involvement; inside be immovable. When your mind is like a tall, straight wall, then you are on the path.” Letting go of the outside means to not get involved in praise or blame, in winning or losing. Don’t be concerned with the outside situation. Inside don’t tie yourself down with your emotions, whether joy, sorrow, or thoughts of what should be done next. When your mind is quiet like a wall, then you are on the path to enlightenment. Building monasteries, supporting monks and nuns, translating sutras and making Buddhist statues—counting up all the things one has done—we have to let go of such outside involvement. To think one’s name might remain after life—thinking like that we will never understand Zen or even live an honest life. That is why Bodhidharuma said “No virtue.”

When doing something for others, it is important to forget about such deeds immediately. To keep

talking about what you have done is like having taken a step forward and then stepping backwards into confusion and attachment. There is no true virtue. By letting go of such attachments, we can arrive at the other shore of the awakened mind.

Virtue

The second wise aspect of following the path is Virtue, or observing the precepts. There are certain rules and precepts given for following the Bodhisattva path. The Ten Precepts, 42 Rules, 250 Rules for Monks and 500 Rules for Nuns were all written down in detail.

Most important are the first five precepts:

1. Do not take life
2. Do not take anything as one’s own
3. Intimate associations should be open, clear and bright.
4. True words and true Mind are the base of attaining the Way
5. Do not delude the true self

Whether you are a lay person or an ordained person, as long as you follow the Buddhist path, you need to live according to these precepts.

Do not take life, is the most important.

As he was dying, the Buddha lay down on his right side, his head

towards the north, his face facing west. In a depiction of this scene, all his disciples are gathered around him, weeping. All the main disciples surround him, crying. Ananda Sonja, who had been the Buddha's attendant for over twenty years, was able to cry only at this time. Elephants, lions, tigers, dogs, horses, cranes, snakes, turtles, worms—all these and many other animals had gathered and were crying in sadness. The first painting made of this scene shows that the Buddha had a mind deeply connected to all beings. The painting shows all living beings sad upon the passing of the Buddha; his compassion had reached them all.

The Buddha always traveled with a cloth to filter water before drinking in order to save even the tiniest living being in the water. When he walked, he used a staff to make a sound so that all the animals on the road could flee and avoid being stepped on. The Buddha paid detailed attention to even the tiniest creatures, in order not to harm or kill them. Similarly, the Buddha taught that each person's life is very precious. Not only was it forbidden to take the life of someone else, but it was impermissible to fail to treasure one's own life. Because each and every one is filled with Buddha Nature, taking any life is taking away Buddha Nature.

One day the Buddha and Ananda were walking along a road. The Buddha took a tiny bit of earth on his finger and asked, "Ananda, which one is more, the earth on my finger or the earth of the whole world?"

Ananda replied, "Honorable One, the earth of this world is a lot more than the earth on your fingernail." The Buddha replied, "Exactly. The amount of earth on this planet represents the numbers of lives that are coming into being, but to be born as a human being is like the grains of earth on my fingernail. Treasure this chance to be born as a human being."

The oceans' fish are so numerous that they can color the sea with their multitude. Sometimes birds fill the sky so that it is almost completely covered. Reflecting this way, it is obvious that human beings are much less numerous. And, looking at the history of evolution, we see that human beings have not been on this planet very long. It took a long course for human beings to develop. Science cannot even count the billions of stars that exist—how many have life on them? Following this thought, the number of people born on this planet are really only as numerous as the grains of sand on the Buddha's fingernail. How then can we waste a life that is so precious? Almost every day, there is news about murders and killings, which give us a dark, heavy feeling. How is it possible for humans not to treasure the life energy? Why do they lose all hope and love for each other? Where can the words of the Buddha fit there? Did modern people ever hear the words of the Buddha or have we forgotten to share the Buddha's knowledge with all of society? All of us need to reflect deeply on this.

Religious wars and other warlike

involvements often proclaim that killing others is a virtuous deed that is to be rewarded. Have we sold our souls to the devil? There is also the thesis that an army is necessary to protect our people, but this does not line up with the Buddha's teaching not to kill. To have lost these basic values is the source of people's sadness today. We need to tell everyone that killing is not an option. We must proclaim and speak out against war. All Buddhist people should hold each other's hands and bring light to this teaching of the Buddha, giving peace to the world.

Do not take anything as one's own

Most people have heard of Albert Schweitzer, a German physician who worked in Africa. When he was a child, he was playing with other children and pushed one of his playmates to the ground. When his playmate got up, he said to Albert, "I am not like you, eating meat twice a week. If I did that, I would not be weaker than you." These words stayed with Albert Schweitzer his whole life. It was not he who had won the fight. He understood that he had prevailed because the other child had poor nutrition and thus, had less strength.

Schweitzer entered university, became a priest, then trained to become a doctor. He lived his life looking at possessions as not his own. Instead seeing all of it as if borrowed from society. Not even his own wisdom was his own realization; it had been given to him by society. He did not study on his own; society had given

him the opportunity to study. He wanted to return and share with all of humanity these gifts he had received. He traveled to Africa, where he relieved people of physical pain in his work as a physician and relieved them of mental pain by teaching the path of God, offering a path to believe in. He lived and gave himself completely to all people in need. This Christian way of looking at life has much in common with a Buddhist view. We do not live by our own small strength but are carried by the entire universe. It is not we who live, but we who are being given life. The Buddhist way of looking at life based on karmic connections brings forth feelings of thankfulness.

There is nothing in this world which is our own; there is nothing we can steal from others. My house, my car, my spouse, my child, my body—such attachment is the source of the division between self and other. Of course, the law says not to take what belongs to others. But, looking at it from a deeper perspective, there is nothing that can possibly be taken. Nature, society, and even our bodies are part of a huger picture and in constant states of change. We cannot hold onto any of it. As it has been said since ancient times, these things are like dewdrops that disappear when the sun comes out. Whatever we try to hold onto can disappear, can vanish in an instant. In the words of the Diamond Sutra, all existing things are like a dream, like lightning in a summer cloud, like a shadow or a drop of dew.

The poet Ikkyu wrote in his death poem:

That which I have borrowed
Now on this day
I simply return

Our bodies, even our minds have been lent. All of these must be completely returned when we die. To realize that, in this life not even a speck of dust is our own, is to understand the precept to not steal.

The Buddha had only three robes, a bowl and a staff—that was all. He embodied the vision of not holding onto anything personal, of giving everything to society. In such a state of mind, it is possible to see how everything is your life energy, how it is all the same life energy, thereby opening a huge world of connectedness. There is nothing we need to be attached to or to search for. Everything moves according to karmic law; an expansiveness is born in our lives. This fosters a state of mind that is ready to act for all of society, at any time. To not see anything as one's own and to live from openness, sharing with all those around us, is to understand the second precept, do not steal. Even our own lives are not something to be attached to; life is given for as long as the karmic connections allow. Like flowing water, all beings are in constant change.

*Intimate associations should be open,
clear and bright.*

There is a koan in the Kattoshu [Entangling Vines, case 154] involving a grandmother who really liked Zen monks. She had practiced since she was young and had special affection for the monks.

The grandmother took food three times a day to a Zen monk who spent many years doing solitary training in a hut. She made daily offerings for many years. The woman's granddaughter helped her with all the chores at home. One day she instructed her granddaughter to give the monk a close hug after she removed the empty food bowls and ask him "How is it at this time?" When she did this, the monk replied, as if nothing had happened,

"An dead tree on a cold cliff;
Midwinter - no warmth"

When the granddaughter reported the monk's answer, she expected her grandmother to be full of joy. Instead, the grandmother was very angry, saying, "For over 20 years I have been giving offerings to a useless monk. I made a huge mistake." She threw the monk out and went so far as to burn down the hut.

What should the monk have said so that the grandmother would not have thrown him out and burned down the hut?

This is how the koan goes. It was not easy to be able to answer, after a hug from the granddaughter, he that he felt like a dried-up pine on a bare rock. That is an answer of a monk who

has done strict training. But why did the grandmother throw him out and burn his hut? Like the desire for food, sexual desire is not easily dismissed by human beings. It requires great efforts to transcend these desires. We have to burn our flesh and break our bones; only then will we be able to answer like this monk.

This is where we see the goal of Hinayana Buddhism. But making such huge efforts, what kind of life comes forth from there? The monk in question was totally occupied with taking care of his own feelings. He wasn't even able to pass on the teaching to the granddaughter. Mahayana Buddhism sees it differently: to not try to extinguish desires, but leave desires as they are and first realize Buddha Nature. From the experience of Buddha Nature, from experiencing that huge, all-embracing Mind, desires will diminish naturally and eventually extinguish. From a deepened state of mind like that, the monk would have been able to respond to the granddaughter with kind words.

In the Kannon Sutra there is a passage that goes: Kanzeon Bodhisattva is Buddha Nature. If we constantly repeat the name of Kanzeon, however strong our desires may be, we will naturally have better perspective on them—a more detached stance. This doesn't mean to simply cut the desires; instead while having desires, to be free from them. The beautiful lotus comes forth from the mud and blossoms without even a bit of mud remaining on the flower. This is how

the flower of Buddha Nature begins to blossom spotless and unsullied from the mud of desires.

Let's go to a place which is above the clouds and from there we can see the shining moon. If we continue to look at the moon from below the clouds, we cannot see its bright radiance. If we feel squashed by desires then we are confused by them. If we go above our desires, however strong they may seem to be, they do not obstruct us. If we are able to go above our own desires, we can actually see them as an interesting part of ourselves. As it says in the Heart Sutra, there are no delusions and no need to free ourselves from delusions. Desires can exist—that is fine. They do not have to exist—that is also fine. The mind of wisdom is at ease with either situation.

The moon doesn't mind being reflected in the water; the water does not know it is reflecting the moon.

While in the midst of our desires, the state of mind that does not get moved around by them is our true, clear mind. To not be attached to desires—that is key to the third precept of clear relations between men and women.

True words and true Mind are the base of attaining the Way.

There is nothing we can believe in in this changing world. In the morning a youth, by nightfall, a cold corpse. We cannot believe in other human beings, or in our bodies, or even in our own

mind. That is how life is—constantly changing. A person could be asleep in bed when a sudden earthquake breaks down the house and walls, killing that sleeping person. Even such a thing as this could happen.

The Buddha taught that there is a dangerous place in every person's mind which is like a violent gang or like a poisonous snake. We can call ourselves lucky if we have not committed a crime, fortunate that we have not been in circumstances where we had to commit a crime. First of all, we must realize our own deepest wish and make that commitment. The only thing to hold onto in one's mind is repeating the name of the Buddha. The believing mind is the only true mind. We know that our lives will pass and we will die. While aware of this we can realize the state of believing mind in zazen. When we enter a state of mind that has no thoughts left whatsoever, right there we can find the truth of humans. It is as if we were realizing the timeless Buddha Nature right in our mind. There is a poem: The one who can believe in this deep mind has, right there, found Buddha Nature. Zazen is the truth, the truth is Buddha Nature, Buddha Nature is freedom from suffering. The words "Buddha Nature" are interchangeable with "Self-Realization." At this place we are neither man nor woman, neither rich nor poor, neither erudite nor ignorant, neither beautiful nor ugly, not young or old, not good or bad, neither Buddha nor residing in delusion, neither big nor small, not red or white, round or square, neither alive nor dead. No words can reach

this place—that is the absolute, that is the source.

There are no words to express the truth that can reach the truth. Satori, the true state of mind, cannot be expressed in words. The precept of not lying means to live only from this true experience of zazen.

Do not delude the true self.

Our essential state of mind is pure, bright, and clear; it is unstoppable. But we, as human beings, have desires that generate thoughts in a single instant. While our true mind is pure, we can still get pulled into the confusion of our thoughts and feelings. Our path in life is to realize purity of mind and continually return to it. If we depend on anything other than this, we might feel momentarily satisfied and relaxed, but we should not be attached to these other means since they work against true clarity.

The Buddha made rules against the production and selling of alcohol. Alcohol itself is not bad, but drinking it covers up our true nature. There are always some people who like alcohol and who, drinking it, do not get drunk. There are also some—artists, politicians, even religious people—who do get drunk a lot but still do great work for society. It is not the drinking of alcohol itself that is inherently bad, but if drinking causes our mind to become unclear and confused then that is not good. We should not lose our true mind to alcohol. Doing so can create problems in our lives or in our families, or cause

us to become irresponsible. This was the Buddha's point.

As Bankei Zenji said, a person who does not drink does not need the fifth precept. Yet, it is not only about alcohol, but about all forms of intoxication. This precept warns that we all have the potential to become intoxicated by other things as well. An observer will notice, for example, when someone has become blind to and uncomprehending of an issue. It is possible to become intoxicated by art, study, work, sports or science—losing oneself totally, becoming unable to see clearly or reflect correctly. In Mahayana Buddhism, all these examples are included in this admonition to not delude the true self.

Even getting attached and stuck on God or the Buddha is a violation of this precept. However thankful you may be for something, what matters is to not become intoxicated by it. Not getting drunk means to experience the free-flowing mind that does not get stuck on anything. Such is the pure, true mind of humans.

Patience

When we burn up all our desires, our eye becomes clearer. We must incinerate feelings of hate and dislike, or these feelings toward others will remain, and we continue to affect people with our unclear state of mind, creating more confusion in society. There is a state of mind in which everything has been burned up, the fire has burned down, and only ash

remains. This is like autumn, when trees cast off their leaves and return their energy to the roots. Zen's state of mind is where all the dust particles in the air have settled; a quiet state of mind—that is the state of mind of zazen. True peace can be brought forth only from this source. There comes the realization that all life has the same source, which is not based on dualism but can encompass the whole world. In this society, parent and child are one, teacher and student are one, the boss and the employees are one, the surroundings and myself are one, nature and humans are one, society and self are one, Buddhas and sentient beings are one—only from such an expansive state of mind can unity be experienced. The more dualistic divisions, the more need for becoming One.

Athletes work, compete, and work on becoming the better one—that is the basis of their world. But even in the world of sports competition, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that we are all connected human beings. Nowadays, the feeling of connectedness has changed in our families. The worlds of the aged and of the youth do not easily connect any more. Parents have a place in their hearts where they trust their children completely, but over years and through many experiences, this becomes increasingly divided. The older the child grows, his or her own ideas become stronger and the divisions increase. At that point the wisdom of the Buddha is needed to say the rain falls equally on good and bad people. An empty mind,

accepting all that comes, like the big earth itself, is called Patience. It is not about enduring with a tight, small state of mind but about accepting with a huge mind and being open to whatever comes along. This is a third aspect of the Buddha's wisdom.

The sutras tell of Furuna Sonja, a disciple of the Buddha.

Few understood the Buddhist path in the land of Ikkoku where Furuna Sonja lived, so people spoke badly about him.

The Buddha asked if he was aware of this. Furuna Sonja replied, "Honorable One, I am thankful that the people of Ikkoku do not throw tiles or stones at me."

"But what would you do if they did throw stones at you?"

"Honorable One, these people have compassionate hearts. Even if they were to throw stones, they would not kill me with their swords, and for that I am thankful."

"Furuna, if they were to kill you with their swords, what would you do then?"

"Honorable One, I would think that these people have compassion and are freeing me from a body filled with desires and confusions and be thankful for that."

"Furuna, with exactly this state of mind, you can liberate and teach the people of Ikkoku."

Thus the Buddha praised Furuna and sent him to the country of Ikkoku.

In order to establish a Buddha land, we have to take on many hardships. This is the wisdom of patience.

Diligence, effort

In the Sutras, the Buddha carefully teaches about right efforts. In the Yuikyogo, the Last Teachings, given on the 15th of February at the full moon before he entered Nirvana, the Buddha spoke very kindly, like a mother giving the final, careful instructions to her child who is about to go on a trip.

In ancient times, fire was made by rubbing a stick into a piece of wood until it caught fire. Later on, there was the practice of striking two stones against each other to create a spark to light kindling. When rubbing the stick into the wood, if you stop even for a moment, it is necessary to start all over again with the same effort. Just as taking a kettle off a fire before it starts to boil will require that you begin all over again if you want it to come to a boil. The same is true for the practice of Zazen. If you practice for many years and do not realize enlightenment, it does not mean that Zazen is bad. It means that we did not follow through to the final point. We have to sit until we lose all awareness of body and thought, lose even awareness of being alive, and once there, we have to cut the root of our life energy. As it says in the Mumonkan: take all the 360 smallest bones and the 84,000 small hair pores

and fill them with this Mu. Become Mu with your whole being. Put your mind on Mu until you have melted into it, until you have become this Mu and do not know what is Mu and what is yourself. Like a hot iron ball that you have in your throat, which can neither be swallowed nor spit out. When you take this to the point where you have totally melted away, you will be like a mute person who cannot speak to tell of a dream, filled with joy and happiness but unable to express it to others. To take the training of zazen this far is called the wisdom of true effort. We cannot be too soft—only from strict practice can our path open.

Awakening is only possible in this present moment. To be claiming that we will be able to experience this in a moment of the past or in a moment of the future makes no sense. We can only be sharp and awake and ready in this very present moment. However, if that past is clarified, then we are more likely to be able to sharpen this moment; not to be caught on a hope of awakening in the future, as if that is going to make it happen. If it is something we hold in our imagination or feel in a vague way like a memory, if it is caught and perceived in this way, it is nothing but the imagining of the superficial thing.

You must not cease in your constant, focused application. Consider even a tiny drip of water falling one drop at a time, such as water dripping from the eaves onto a stone below, wears away the stone drop by drop. If each time you look away from that and

say to yourself, “Oh I wish it was like this”, or “Oh why can’t it be just like that”, the essence will get diluted and you’ll let go of it all completely. It is just like making a spark with two sticks. We rub the sticks together and keep rubbing without stopping to get the heat that can then bring forth a spark. Then finally, with the friction of the sticks rubbing against each other there will be smoke, and the spark will come forth and start the paper scraps burning, and a fire can be built. If as you do it you are always stopping and resting as you do it, no matter how great a deep vow you have, the goal will not be able to be realized. To do it without ceasing and keep the efforts going all the way to completion is what is called making true efforts. This is the paramita of deep effort.

It has been said that to think nothing at all is the state of mind of the Buddha, but to sustain that in every single nen is very difficult to do. We do zazen, planning to sit and think about nothing at all, but one mind-moment after the next, things come and go, the thoughts continually arising and departing. This is not the state of continuous clear mind-moments. People have so many various experiences, so many things they take refuge in, so many memories of the past. We have to let go of all of that, to no longer feel any need to be associated with any of that. Instead, we need to become absorbed in our deepest interior and realize the place where we extend throughout the heavens and earth as one single layer. This is the state of mind of being a person who is mute and can’t tell

his or her dream. We understand very well, but we cannot communicate this state of mind to anyone else. This essence can't be expressed. We have realized this place where our state of mind cannot be known in any conceptual way because it is beyond any dualistic perception. In that place all past history and superficial knowledge and social conditioning is let go of completely. This great effort is needed to directly encounter our true nature.

Samadhi

Samadhi is our very basic nature: outside letting go of all distractions, inside letting go of all obstructions. This is the practice of Zazen.

Zazen is only about becoming One. We align our bodies, align our breathing, align our minds, thus aligning ourselves and the world around us. We place ourselves in the correct position, straighten the spine in an expansive way, align the neck and head at the top. We become like towers rising high toward the sky. This position is most supportive for quieting the mind. Also, it is healthy. We breathe in a quiet and rhythmic way, not making any sounds. This kind of breathing is most supportive for a quiet state of mind.

Next, we align the mind. The Buddha said that we are all endowed with pure Buddha Nature, but due to confusion and delusion, we do not realize it. When the mind becomes quiet, inherent wisdom can come forth naturally. When a thought

arises, do not stop it but allow it to flow like running water. Shido Munan Zenji said that to not think is to arrive at the Buddha Nature. If the mind becomes quiet, then Buddha Nature shines through it. Shining, it can touch all that is around us. It can touch our family and our daily life and it can bring peace to all we encounter. Constantly, we double check where we stand and repent our mis-behavior so that we do not act from an unsettled place.

These are the basic values for living as human beings. If we lose sight of them, quarrels and misunderstandings happen right away, making us feel that we are being pulled here and there. We constantly return to our feet, where they touch the ground. From there, we can work to bring forth a balanced future. When the feet are standing firmly on the ground, then, for the first time, we can take the right step, moving our foot forward freely. This is the meaning of meditation.

Samadhi is most important. In our zazen, we have to have samadhi or it is not true zazen, it is zazen which is done for battling our bodies and thoughts. In the beginning it may feel that this is what it is all about. People get caught on this, and they don't let go. But if we begin to know the essence, we know not to be deceived by our physical pains. Especially at the beginning our bodies and our minds seem to be big problems, but as we continue, we learn how not to give them attention. This is not done by resisting, but by becoming one with

your focus, and then one layer after the other is lifted off. To know how to bring the body and mind into oneness is most important; and that is done by not adding in extraneous thinking, but by jumping right into the middle of the doing of it.

It may seem like an impossibility at the beginning. Regarding how to sit, our biggest problems are that we become overly excited and scattered, or become too drowsy, sleepy and lethargic. But there are the many and various words of experienced people to guide us in these challenges. Forgetting our own self-conscious awareness, and not trying to analyze it and figure it out, but by becoming simple and throwing everything into just the doing of it; going about it in this way is how we take care of these problems.

Certainly our zazen can not be done by sitting haphazardly and hazily, or by calling in many extra thoughts. Only by letting go of all of it. Because many are so used to holding their ki high and keeping their physical body taut and tight in the upper half, then that brings a very difficult time. Rather, to let go of all of the tension in the top half of your body, and then we can come to know that unobstructed place. In old times, it was said that this was just like gathering water, drop by drop, into a cup. Or by filling up a balloon which has been flaccid and limp, and if we blow into it continually, it becomes more and more full and taut. At first we think that we are what does the breathing, but it is not really like

that; the breath is born. This very easy to see by doing tai chi and chi gong. When we feel that energy in our body, at the beginning we may think that it is our own, but if we try and push that which we think is our own, we become tight. If we let go of it and know this place of no thinking, and then if we continue without any gaps there whatsoever, we are able to encounter this place in clarity. It is not about asking this to some Buddha, but about clarifying our own state of mind.

What has to be seen is that we are not doing this, but that it is being done through us. Letting go of our own stuck places, we can see our mistakes clearly. Today in the world, everyone is so lonely and isolated because they become attached to their idea of being alone—because they become attached to that place. If we are to make a society, we have to see through this clearly, to develop that zazen which knows that place of having forgotten oneself completely; to have this deeply and well established, or we cannot see clearly.

We have to learn well to realize it thoroughly. Not saying “What good is this?” This is the problem today. We blame things on a place, an environment, a system, a person. We have to be able to do this letting go completely, to realize this is being done for ourselves so we can help all beings realize it. But who is it that is doing it?

Wisdom

The tradition of Bodhidharma says: take no thought as the master. In Zen, “no thought” is wisdom. Shonensozoku—the following of clear mind moments—is our guide. The essence of a mirror is no thought. That is, to see things, to reflect things without adding to them, is the working of wisdom. Bankei Zenji said that our Buddha Nature is like a mirror. When something comes before a mirror, it is reflected, but when it is gone, nothing remains. If something dirty comes in front of the mirror, the mirror does not become dirty just by reflecting it. When something beautiful passes before the mirror, the mirror does not become beautiful by reflecting it. In this way, Bankei Zenji taught that our true wisdom cannot be gathered from outside, but can only be found within our own mind.

What Bankei Zenji is referring to is our Original Mind, our True Nature. Our True Nature can be found when we experience for ourselves that there is nothing being added and nothing being taken away. We perceive things. We see and hear them, but as soon as they have passed, no trace is left whatsoever. This is like a puppet moving its arms and legs—there is no self there at all. If asked to show the one who is doing the moving, we cannot find anybody there. From this place that is not stuck on anything, from this empty mind, we can respond to outside impressions with wisdom.

If we hold onto the images we see and hear, it is not possible to move from

clarity and wisdom. For there to be nothing in our mind, that is the truth. From that state, we can move in a natural way—if we are hungry, we eat; if we are tired, we sleep. Such purity of action is the Buddha’s wisdom. When talking about the Buddha’s wisdom, it is easy to think of it as something special. That is a big mistake. In True Wisdom, nothing is held onto and thus, whatever comes to you can be embraced.

As Shido Munan Zenji said, “While being alive, die and die completely. From there, anything you do is good.” From that state, true freedom comes forth. When all delusions and confusions have been discarded, we are able to move in accordance with this reality’s truth. From a state of inner freedom, wisdom is expressed through us. Our Buddha Nature is untouched by good things or bad things, no matter how numerous. This is how the Buddha lived, moving his arms and legs, seeing the green willow as green, the red flower as red.

The Buddha heard the crow’s call or the song of the sparrow in the same way we can hear it. The Buddha and Bodhidharma practiced this way, emptying their minds and opening them to pure experience. If we realize that our mind is Mu, that it is empty, our Mu is the same as that of the Buddha and of Bodhidharma. Every human being is endowed from the origin with this wisdom. It reaches every corner of the universe; vertically it passes through all three times, horizontally it stretches out through all the ten directions. If a

dog barks, we hear it as 'woof'. When we are sad, we cry; when happy, we laugh. We can move freely. This is our wisdom, our freedom of mind. All sentient beings are endowed with this wisdom from the origin.

We are always attached to something—to this or to that. We lose clear Mind and become divided when we are moved around by anything at all and are separated from things in any way. Instead, in each instant, be soaked or absorbed into it, then we become this place like flowing water. A new world always coming to us; matching completely to whatever comes never stopped by it nor stagnant. When we stagnate we become confused.

In all the boundless realms of space, and in the separation between self and other, not a single hair can be inserted.

From the limitless past to the immediate present, we have never separated from this very moment.

To realize and experience this directly, and then we can see how it is! The Buddha, here, listening to this very talk and this very moment the Buddha is teaching! This is not imagination or rational thinking. It is this very truth, this one moment—one clear moment after the next—that is called "paramita." It's not about being caught or pulled around in this moment, having ideas of how things

are given or taken away or come and go.

As Dogen has said, to wander toward things is delusion. When things come right to us, as we are, that is enlightenment. Our mind is like a full, flowing stream. Hakuin says, "like ice, like water"—if it flows, it doesn't freeze and harden. Flowing water can take the shape of whatever container it enters and yet it doesn't change. Hard ice kills fish and can damage things. If our Mind is flowing freely, then this is the way of being a Buddha. If our Mind is not flowing freely, this is the way of ignorance. We can't be caught on reason, thinking, or we stop flowing. If we are caught on thoughts we get deluded. That is not the shore of paramita but rather, the shore of delusion.

Rinzai give in the preface of his Record these four conditions: "Sometimes I take away the person but do not take away the surroundings." This is to forget yourself completely and to enter into society completely, not a bit of self-consciousness left, and dedicate yourself 100 percent to serving, no demands of your own.

Then the next, "Sometimes I take away the surroundings but do not take away the person." Right in the middle of the world, to take away the person but don't take away society. To clearly state what's right is right, what's wrong is wrong, regardless of who you're talking to—to be the Master and correct things appropriately. Straightaway

to “turn on a dime” according to circumstances, and correct that which has to be corrected.

Then, “Sometimes I take away both person and surroundings”— Sometimes there’s not ‘me,’ there’s not ‘other.’ Between heaven and earth, there’s not a single thing”—that samadhi of zazen. You have to know that world, too.

And if you think that’s all there is, there is the last: “Sometimes I take away neither person nor surroundings.” “Ahhhh! It’s nice weather today... Let’s get a bit of sun!....Let’s take a walk in the forest!... Let’s stroll around the pond!” To really taste the flavor of those times! Those sorts of occasions exist, too.

So, can you switch that completely, that freely? If you’re not careful you end up being dragged around by your desires. “Just a little bit more... just a little bit more...!” Not really willing to make a change, too comfortable where you are, you’re stopped, unable to respond freely. Instead on each occasion, to be completely free and adjusting to what is going on! Switch freely according to context. That wisdom is prajna paramita.

It is only due to attachments and delusions, searching for something special, that we ignore our own wisdom. This wisdom transcends ideals of good and bad. Realize this is to understand the path of the six paramitas.

Index

A

Ananda 96

B

Bankei 101, 106

Baso 37

Blue Cliff 29, 84

Bodhidharuma 94, 95, 106

Bokujo 85

Buddha Nature 9, 17, 23, 30, 32, 34, 35, 37, 38, 68, 78, 96, 99, 100, 104, 106

C

Chikuren Choja 93

D

Daito 18, 19

Daruma 18, 20, 22, 24, 67, 87, 88, 89

Diamond Sutra 14, 68, 74, 75, 97

Dogen 64, 77, 107

Dokyo Etan 4

E

Emperor 24, 50, 88, 94

Entangling Vines 4, 98

F

faith 35, 48, 62, 69, 84

five precepts 95

Formless 76

Four Wisdoms 81, 82, 83, 84

Furuna 102

G

Ganto 2, 4

Gateless Gate 84

H

Hakuin 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 17, 18, 19, 48, 49, 70, 77, 78, 92, 107

Hakuyu 5

Heart Sutra 15, 78, 99

Hekigan. *See* Blue Cliff

hidden virtue 48

Hyakujo 14, 84

I

Ikkyu 24, 88, 98

introspection 5

Isan 14, 15, 16

J

Jimyo 2, 3

Joshu 12, 15, 20, 22, 23, 24, 30, 32, 34, 35, 67, 84, 87, 88

K

Kannon 99

Kanzeon Bodhisattva 99

Kattoshu 98

Kiso 68

koan 4, 5, 12, 16, 24, 32, 34, 75, 79, 84, 98

koans 12, 46, 84

Kyogen 14, 15, 16

L

Lotus Sutra 1, 5, 6, 11, 40, 92

M

Mokuren 26, 28, 93

Mumon 32, 34, 35, 45

Mumonkan. *See* Gateless Gate

N

naikan 5

Nansen 4, 5, 34

Niso Eka 36, 67, 95

O

Obaku 84, 85, 86

Original Face 77

Original Mind, 9, 16, 17, 18, 106

P

Patience 101, 102

precepts 47, 48, 50, 92, 95

R

repent 43, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 104

repentance 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53

Rinzai 1, 17, 20, 34, 74, 84, 85, 86, 90, 92, 107

Ryotan 75

S

Setcho 29

Sharihotsu 93

Shido 49, 104, 106

Shikan 92

Shodoka. *See* Song of Enlightenment

Shoju 4, 5, 6, 7

Sixth Patriarch 20, 44, 46, 47, 56, 68, 70, 73, 77, 78, 79, 81, 83, 92

Song of Enlightenment 38, 92

Suigan 49

T

Taegu 86

Takuan 45

tea 13, 74, 79

Tekisui 79, 80

Tesshu 79, 80

Tokusan 74, 75

True Nature 16, 17, 18, 106

True Wisdom 106

U

Unmon 12

V

Vimalakirti 22, 39, 44, 57, 60, 92

Y

Yasenkanna 5

Yoka Genkaku 92

Z

zazen 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 22, 24, 45, 46, 47, 50, 51, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 73, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 84, 88, 89, 90, 100, 101, 103, 104, 105, 108

