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## 1: The Sky Sits Up Straight

Presented by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, Saturday, August 24th 2019

Anzan Hoshin roshi has said to me, "The sky is always sitting up straight above, around, and all the way to the ground. The sky envelops the earth with atmosphere. As the atmosphere fades, the space of the sky extends to the sun and past, enveloping the galaxy and all stars and worlds galaxies to the edges of the universe. But people are focussed upon whether the sky is cloudless and blue, or clouded and grey."

The other day, Roshi once more pointed out to me that "Clouds are magnificent atmospheric sculptures standing in the sky, far beyond the talents of any sculptor, formed of air and water."

Clouds forming and reforming, sometimes massive and imposing, towering and billowy; sometimes displaying as wisps and curls and waves, as fish scales or solid sheets of pewter. It is art being created moment to moment and it's all free.

In the Buddhadharma, the sky has often been used as a metaphor for complete and utter Awakening, the Dharmakaya or the context of Awake Awareness. Within the context of the sky, within the Troposphere, the band of atmosphere closest to the earth, vapour congeals into water or ice droplets, forming clouds and these have been used to represent the congealing of attention into content within context.

In "Six Verses in Leisurely Solitude", written by Eihei Dogen zenji, one verse entitled "The True Person Displayed Throughout The Ten Directions" says:

The true person is  
no one in particular.

Like the deep blue  
of the vast sky  
it is everyone, everywhere.

Breathing in, breathing out, we breathe the sky. No matter what we are doing, regardless of how we feel about what we are doing, we are always breathing the sky.

On a clear evening if you are able to see the Milky Way, what you are seeing is about 200 billion stars and the universe says, "Do you know how ancient I am, how beautiful I am, how vast I am?" And you recognize this because you are made of stardust and so you are what those 200 billion stars are, and you and they arise together in the same space. "It is everyone, everywhere". You see the light of stars that are 100,000 lightyears away or more, and although you can't touch them, their light crosses vast space and time and touches you.

What you are able to see of the sky, and of space beyond the sky, is only possible because of light - the light from the sun, the light reflected by the moon, and the light from objects far from the earth. Right now, facing the wall, you are seeing space lit by daylight and electric lighting. You are seeing sky. And the space of the sky is always available to you.

What we're talking about is context. The open space of the sky is the context. Clouds within the sky refer to content within context. In this series of Dharma Talks we will discuss how to open the clouds of states you create by opening to context.

At any moment you notice a contraction, by simply feeling the breath and the body and opening to the space around the body, there is a loosening of the contraction. All contractions are simply knots tied in space.

Contraction is the result of grasping and clenching and recoiling and refusing the openness of reality. Self-image continuously sorts experiencing into what it likes (passion, or grasping), what it doesn't like (aggression, pushing away and struggling), and then everything else, the 99.9% of experiencing that it can't be bothered with (ignorance) because it doesn't fit into the categories of liking and disliking. Self-image wants to hide, to lose itself in states.

The space doesn't bend to your likes and dislikes. It doesn't care about any of your states or storylines. And yet, it envelops all of them with an intimacy that is closer than any relationship you could ever have and always has space for anything that might come up.

In a collection of poetry called "The Sky Itself" published in 1986, Roshi wrote:

the wisdom-sword of Monju  
takes no sides

it cuts  
leaving no trace

it cuts cutting  
it cuts Monju

right edge cuts left

left cuts right

but leave all this behind

and cut into THIS!

this moment, this sound

autumn rain falling

in the midst of darkness

the sky itself

this breath

As the Roshi says, "The three klesas or three poisons of passion, aggression, and ignorance are self-image's three fundamental options towards anything that arises: run to it, run away from it, curl up in a ball and ignore it. But all that is known points to the open space of Knowing."

We too, can sit up straight, as does the sky that is always around the clouds. And even clouds are just forms of the sky. Whatever comes and goes, whatever clouds form and dissolve, sit with this breath as the sky that you are breathing in and breathing out.

2: Five Heaps and Three Poisons

Presented by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, Saturday, October 19th 2019

I&nbsp;have spoken about the open space of the sky in order to represent the open context of our Experiencing, and clouds within the sky to refer to contents arising within this context.

In order to talk about the various kinds of content that students became clouded by, we should address what these 'clouds' or entanglements are, and how they happen. And to do that we need to begin with the traditional Teaching of the three kleshas of passion, aggression, and stupidity because they are the currents that stir together as all of our 'entanglements'. They make up the basic style through which self-image relates to experience.

So, what are the clouds? Self-image, the image one has of oneself and the rest of the world

comes about through a process of contraction. To understand the three klesas it is helpful to understand the play of the “five skandhas”. Now, don't be scared by Sanskrit terms. We chanted the Heart Sutra, the Maha Prajnaparamita Hridaya Sutra just a few moments ago.

In translations from the early Pali texts the five skandhas are often referred to as the "five aggregates of clinging". They can also be called the "five heaps". The five skandhas have been translated by Anzan Hoshin roshi as "form, basic reactivity, symbolization, habitual patterning and consciousness". When the Buddha originally presented his Teachings on this, he piled up five heaps of different grains to represent these categories of impermanent phenomena.

The five skandhas can be discussed in many different ways, but they are primarily used in the Abhidhamma and the Abhidharmakosa to describe body (rupa) and mind or nama (with the categories of vedana, samjna, samskara, vijnana) as a collection of various kinds of things instead of being one solid thing, like the heaps of grains that the Buddha showed his disciples.

Instead of just describing body and mind as various kinds of things, the five skandhas can also be used to describe how perceptions and cognitions occur as a consequence of self-image. To illustrate this, I'll quote from a passage in the “Development of Buddhist Psychology” series of classes presented by Anzan roshi in 1990:

“An example I use quite often - which of course is not at the level of mind moments, more at the level of mind-hours, mind-weeks or mind-years, but is something that we can use to understand how subtler processes happen - is to draw an example from something that almost everybody has experienced.

You walk into a room and there isn't anybody there and you know there is nobody in the house, but there is somebody there and (sharp inhalation) you feel shocked for a moment.

And then you look and you realize it is a mirror and it is just you.

So you walk into the room and all of a sudden there is “HUHHH” – there is just “Something is there!” and everything becomes frozen. Everything becomes form. There is a big split that comes in so that you are there and what you are experiencing is out there, very definitely out there, but so much so that you cannot get any kind of focus on it.

At first it is just “HUHHH”, just panic and then feeling. You go “What is it? What's wrong? There is somebody here. There is somebody here.”

And then perception, the third skandha comes in and you go, “There is a person in here and they are about this tall and they are”...so on and so forth.

And the next skandha, the fourth skandha comes in, in which you kind of rummage through and

see if what you are experiencing now has a precursor, that is to say, if it is similar to something you have experienced in the past.

And you go, "Well, that's me."

Then the fifth skandha, or consciousness skandha, "Oh! It's a mirror." And sort of cluing into what is actually going on.

So the five skandhas can be looked at as simply a way of clarifying what we are experiencing. However, the way in which that happens tends to have an awful lot of contraction to it.

First of all, this sense of "this", "that", "self" and "other", something out there – has a quality of panic to it. Not just in that example, but in the way in which self-image functions as nama rupa in the arising of mind moments, there is a very frozen, crystallized quality to it."

According to the Abhidhamma and the Abhidharmakosa, attachment to feelings is developed through the second skandha of basic reactivity. And that brings us to the topic of the three Kleshas.

In the Pali Canon's discourses kilesa is often associated with the various passions that "defile" bodily and mental states. In the Pali Canon's Abhidhamma and post-canonical Pali literature, ten "defilements" are identified, the first three of which – passion, aggression, and stupidity – are considered to be the "roots" of suffering. The Sanskrit word klesa refers to mental states that temporarily cloud the mind's nature. They are referred to as "the three poisons" in Mahayana Buddhism. The kleshas specifically refer to the subtle movement of mind (citta) when it initially encounters a mental object. This is the second skandha of basic reactivity.

So at this point, the three klesas are as yet very subtle. They are orientations rather than actual emotions or feeling-tones and storylines. They are like predispositions rather than the stirring of states. But if this becomes amplified through the following skandhas of symbolization, and then habitual patterning, it becomes a state within consciousness.

It is through following the direction of these predispositions that we become lost in the poisonous clouds of the klesas. Unless our practice is deep and subtle, we will only very rarely recognize the basic reactivity of the second skandha. But through opening up around how the three klesas of passion, aggression, and stupidity have clouded our experience in the fifth skandha again and again and again, we become more and more capable of releasing these states earlier and earlier.

When we chanted the Heart Sutra this morning, it kept telling us that the five skandhas are empty, or sky-like. They are not solid, not fixed. They are like air and moisture and various causes and conditions mixing as clouds while all around the clouds is the already open sky.

When our world seems covered in clouds of passion, aggression, and stupidity, and we are coughing and hacking at the consequences of identifying with them, the truth is that our world is actually already open like the sky. We do not have to follow through on our pre-dispositions, our compulsions, our clouded states.

The open sky is available to us in the spaciousness of our actual bodily sensations, our ability to sit up straight and to walk upright through the spaces around the bodymind. As our practice deepens and opens then we can realize the five skandhas as the five wisdoms and the three poisons as the numberless gates to the Dharma that we can move through freely.

I will talk about the shapes of these clouds of passion, aggression, and stupidity soon. But, right now, let us sit up straight and walk upright.

All Around, All at Once Part 1

Presented by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, August 25, 2018

If you were to take a moment to think about the last ten thoughts that you thought, could you even remember what they were with real accuracy? The last nine? The last three?

Most of your thoughts are just echoing back to yourself what you already know. For an extremely simple example, you hear the sound of a bird and you think "bird". You already knew it was a bird, before the word came up, and the word doesn't give you any more information about what that sound was. But you say it to yourself anyway, as though it were necessary, as though it actually means something about the experience of hearing the sound. You're no longer hearing the sound because you're listening to yourself talking to yourself about a bird that at this point exists only as an idea in your head. Or you hear someone cough and you think "I hope I don't get what he has". But you already know that, right? Let's say you're anxious about something. You might think something along the lines of "Oh I am so worried about so and so". But you already know that too, because before the words formed, there was a feeling of anxiety, which you then described to yourself in words.

How much of your intelligence is tied up in closed recursive loops like these? The "content" of the storylines, your thoughts and feelings about various topics you tie yourself in knots about, are always occurring within a larger context.

When you are sitting zazen, you can make the choice to open to the widest possible context, the open expanse of vast space, which not a place or a certain kind of space and definitely not a state of mind. It cannot be imagined or thought of or about. It is a coming and going of infinite ever-changing details, open to the ten directions. It has no edges or boundaries because it is your entire experience and of the Nature of Experiencing as Such. And even these are just the contents arising within various contexts which are all just contents within the ultimate context of Experiencing in itself. Even Suchness is just the radiance, the shining, of the luminosity of Awareness in itself.

Anzan Hoshin roshi provides a wonderful explanation of the necessity of opening around recursive loops in a series of classes he presented on the 8,000 Line Prajnaparamita sutra in 1991:

Quote:

"Although we might name something, the name doesn't refer to anything and the name in its own nature is also empty. A way to understand this is, as I often say, you might look at the wall, you might look at someone; you might like them or dislike them. But who they are is completely apart from your liking and disliking them. It is just that, of course, their meaning for you is the fact that you like them or don't like them and so that is all that you see, that is all that you are open to, that is all that is going on. So that feeling tone and that texture become how you interpret your world to the point that when one is embedded within a texture, within a feeling tone and within a category and a thought, then there is very little room for anything else. Not only does that person only have meaning in terms of whether you like them or don't, you don't feel your feet, you are not aware of your breath; you don't really see the colours or hear the sounds. Everything becomes limited because you have taken this texture and used it as your standpoint, as your basis, as your perspective from which you will encounter experience at that moment. And since you are taking contraction as the basis for how you will experience your experience your experience is contracted.

Now, the thing is that although we might only be aware of someone in terms of whether we like them or whether we don't, that has nothing to do with who they are. That is simply our category for them and if we attend to what is going on at that time we will see that that feeling of hatred and loathing is very, very powerful, however, that is not who and what this person is. There is much more going on other than just this feeling. There is the person's eyes and the colour of their skin, the colour of their hair, the colour of the clothes that they are wearing, the look in their eyes, what they are saying. We start to get some sense that they stand outside of our world of thought. When we start to realize that, we start to have a little bit more room and so then we might be able to begin to experience more of our experience more fully and completely and so then the texture starts to break down a little bit. Now, just as the person stands independent of our feeling tone, our feeling tone and the person and the wall and the floor and the tree are all arising within experience. Each of these things are independent of each other and yet each of these are components of experience as a whole. Each of these are how experience is displaying itself. So in

that way, each thing is what it is but it is also intimately a part of everything else because that which presents itself as the sound of a bird is the same thing that is presenting itself as the thought, as the colour, as the sound. That which is living each being is living all beings. Each being is all beings. The nature of each dharma interpenetrates every other dharma."

End quote.

Each thirty-minute round of zazen that you sit is a time-out from the usual mutterings of self-image. It's not a time to rearrange the twigs and sticks in the nest of old views. It's not a time to keep checking with yourself about what you think or feel about everything and everyone or your life as a whole.

Any thought that comes up should be used as a starting point from which to open all around and all at once. In practical terms that means that when you notice you are thinking about something, don't complete the sentence. Just drop it and come back to the breath at the diaphragm and tanden, the sensations of the rest of the bodymind sitting, the seeing and hearing. Open to the details of reality all around the thoughts.

There is no one doing the thinking. The thought is the display of the Luminosity of Knowing, just as a ripple on water is the display of water. From the point of view of the water there is no ripple, there is just water. Practise like water and as soon as you notice a ripple, come back to the Knowing in which they arise.

When you are sitting zazen, this moment can seem to be something to ignore and avoid in order to try to be somewhere and someone that is more fun, more interesting, more like what your stories tell you it should all be like. But this place and moment is where and when your life is actually taking place. Practise this and let the understanding of it extend into the rest of your life because it is always true.

Thoughts and feelings bubble up out of the chemistry of bodymind all the time. But that does not mean that you should follow them or believe them and it certainly doesn't mean you should act on them. All states, all thoughts need to be opened to the context in which they are arising. If you're not doing that, anything can seem to be true, any conclusion justified.

When we open to the spaciousness of experiencing, there is a wholeness that we experience. And when we practise this enough, we also begin to recognize when we are sitting, but the rest of the time too, that the dulling down and narrowing of our perceptions has a texture to it, a quality of unwholesomeness that we can feel. There is a distinct difference between being contracted and allowing oneself to open to the spaciousness of experiencing. But as the Roshi often says, "If it is closed, open around it. If it is open, open further". This is because it isn't enough to open around thoughts and feelings and states.



As Anzan Hoshin roshi says, "The whole world is already ready."

Right now, are you feeling the breath at the diaphragm and tanden? Are you feeling your hands in the mudra, your legs and feet as well as the breath at the diaphragm and tanden? Are you feeling the sensations of the whole posture of zazen while simultaneously feeling the breath at the diaphragm and tanden? Are you opening to seeing and hearing as well as feeling the sensations of the whole bodymind, together with the sensations of the breath at the diaphragm and tanden and your hands in the mudra, together with the sensations of your legs and feet?&nbsp;

If not, why not? What else are you doing? Are you thinking about your practice? If so, stop that and actually practice, by opening attention to the sensations. Begin with the sensations of the breath at the diaphragm and tanden and use that as a starting point to open all around, all at once. Are you talking to yourself about how you can't do this? If so, stop that, and come back to the sensations of the breath at the diaphragm and tanden. Anyone can do this. If you are breathing you can do this because the sensations of the breath are already there. You're not making them happen. You just need to allow attention to fall open to what is already going on. Allow yourself to experience the whole of your experiencing instead of bits and pieces of it, filtered through the contraction that is self-image.&nbsp;

The habitual narrowing of attention on fragments of experiencing, on thoughts and feelings and storylines is very, very strong because that narrowing is what it has been doing all of your life. Narrowing and focusing is easier than questioning into what is actually taking place. And it's certainly easier than questioning how YOU are viewing things, let alone giving up the sense of certainty that contraction provides.&nbsp;

You can see this so clearly when you start sitting zazen. You sit on your cushion and you start off with the best of intentions to be mindful and before you know it, attention does what attention usually does. It focuses on a thought and away you go for five minutes or ten minutes, propagating and contracting and the focus becomes so strong that you don't even know that you are sitting in a room. But that can only go on for so long and no matter how deeply enmeshed you become in the storyline, eventually you will find yourself back on the zafu in a room that has nothing to do with your storylines. It's a bit shocking at first to see how completely you can be fooled into thinking reality is a certain way only to have that completely fall apart. And there's that wall again, exactly where it was when you checked out five minutes ago.&nbsp;

Students tend to alternate between narrowing and focusing attention into concentration states and spacing out. An example of a concentration state would be counting the breath or making up little lists of 'things to notice' - Telling yourself to "feel the breath, feel the mudra, feel the feet, open to seeing, open to hearing and watching and monitoring yourself mapping the bodymind and following the list. As though there were something that could roam around the bodymind flipping switches, twiddling dials, and making sensations happen. The antidote to this is to drop the list. There is no list. This is just part of the same habit you have of talking to yourself about everything.

If you notice you are telling yourself "feel the breath", all you need to do is recognize that you are already feeling the breath, that attention was beginning to open to the sensations of the breath before the little voice came up that said "feel the breath". Attention is far more intelligent and expansive than the list-maker. The list-maker can't keep up with the myriad of details that attention can open to all at once, all in the same breath. The list-maker is a symptom of being too heavy-handed in your practice, too ponderous. Let attention be as light and quick as it actually is, able to open round and wide, able to attend to many details simultaneously.

And then there is the spacing out. Sometimes that is due to following thoughts and feelings and storylines quite aimlessly. And this is not as the Roshi would say, "sitting a round of zazen; it's just sitting around". And sometimes the spacing out can be the result of a deliberate effort to cultivate a state that is spaced out, as though that were some sort of goal.

For example, some people come to us saying that they are doing shikan-taza. They have read or heard Dogen zenji's phrase. Even the Japanese Soto Zen Church says that shikan-taza is sitting and just having faith that sitting is realization. But this usually means that they are just sitting around lost in their old nest of views, following the closed circles of self-concern as Dogen zenji warned against.

It would be nice if we could all sit "shikan-taza" or "just sitting", but this requires a LOT of sitting, a lot of practice both on and off the zafu. It requires practising the discipline of learning to open all around and all at once to what you are actually experiencing instead of following thoughts and feelings and storylines. I have a quote from Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi on this topic, taken from the teisho series "The Person and World of Zazen, part one".

The Roshi says:

But there is a way of talking and thinking about zazen that I have seen some contemporary Soto Zen Buddhists do, especially in Soto Shumicho, in which zazen is treated as if it were a sacrament. It is an approach that says that "one moment of zazen is a moment of being Buddha" and so when one sits in zazen for that moment one is Buddha, regardless of what the bodymind is actually doing in the posture. For one thing, this can lead to a fixation on the posture, especially kekkafuza or sitting in full lotus, as if it were the only possible posture and that other than sitting in that posture, there is nothing else you need to do to be practising zazen. And if it doesn't feel like "you are Buddha" then you just do not understand the mysteries of zazen. It is like the Catholic Church's mystery of transubstantiation in which a piece of bread miraculously becomes the flesh of Jesus Christ. The fact that it is physically and in every way still a piece of bread and not human flesh, thankfully, is in that view actually the point. The confounding of rationality and making the leap of faith to believe that the bread is not bread is the point. And so when zazen is viewed in this way, it is not seen or understood as it is, as well.

It can look like zazen. Someone in black robes and a shaved head is sitting in perfect lotus

posture facing the wall in a beautiful ancient hall surrounded by exquisite garden buildings on immaculate grounds with the song of a hototogisu wafting through the window from the surrounding bamboo forest. That looks exactly like zazen. What could look more like zazen? But if the person is just sitting around there thinking about breakfast or bukkake or even listening to the birdsong and is not open to whole bodily feeling and all of the other sounds, and the sensations of temperature and pressure, and fragrances and the play of light and colour on the wall and all of the other ten thousand dharmas that are straining to be experienced but are being shut away by that focus of attention, then it is not zazen. Not at all. Let alone shikan-taza and shinjin-datsaraku. It is just mild symptoms that are unrelated to the disease, whatever you might call it.

Zazen is not a sacrament to be received passively which sanctifies someone. It is a practice that is realized when it is actively engaged. This active engagement is releasing the someone and receiving the sacred totality of zazen through zazen with zazen. Then each moment is of equal merit if we allow them all to be equality without equal or mutodo .

In our practice, we practise with our attention, with whole bodily sensation and with all of our sense fields. We practise in, as, and through the whole bodymind, opening all of the capacities of bodymind and the instructions for zazen are very clearly set forth by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi.&nbsp;

But our practice is not limited to sitting in zazen. What we are really practising when we sit zazen is opening attention all around, all at once, into the vastness of open space. Zazen has no limits. True zazen is each moment in which we sit beyond limits and then stand and walk and talk without ceasing zazen. Vastness is never hidden away or roped off from ordinary life. Ordinary life is always already vast. And so we must practise "Gyoji" or "turning the wheel of continuous practice". Gyoji is all-embracing practice without any sense of distinction between formal and informal situations because wherever you are, whatever you are doing, you can make choices about how open or closed attention is. You can make the choice to live with intentionality or just allow yourself to be swept along by the currents of discursiveness and contraction. This is true when you are sitting zazen and it is true when you are doing absolutely anything else that you do.&nbsp;

True practice is not creating or fabricating something new. It is stopping what you have been habitually doing, playing the role of the self you tell yourself, and have been told, you must be.

To practise more deeply, more sincerely, more openly, it is essential to practise the posture. First and foremost you are sitting and this is more important, more "real", and more revealing than any thought or feeling that might come up. This is what you are practising - the posture - because doing just that will show you what you need to see: how you drift, how you get lost in thought, so that you can stop doing that. Zazen exposes all of the ways in which you are not really doing zazen and so it exposes all of the ways in which you do not do all of the other things that you do. Nothing else will show you this as clearly as zazen will. The point of the posture is to sit in the

reality of this moment. The posture points to the open space of reality all around and within and as the bodymind. So, feel the fingers and thumbs in the mudra, actually feel the tip of the tongue against the roof of the mouth, the teeth lightly touching; feel the breath, the balance and alignment of the bodymind on the zafu and stay with that, moment after moment. Anything that pulls you away from attending to the posture is exactly what you need to release. Release it into the colours and forms and sounds and sensations and renew your effort to practise by opening all around it, all at once, again, and again, and again.

All Around, All at Once: Part 3: "Unfabricated"

Presented by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, November 17, 2017

Each moment unfolds as a display of richness, of colours and forms and sounds, as a myriad of sensations. Sincere practice is allowing the whole bodymind to live as the brightness of seeing, the depth of sound, as ever-changing sensations, as the Luminosity of experiencing as a whole. And when we allow ourselves to do even a measure of this, there is a quality of questioning, of interest, of intimacy with everything that is being experienced. But to do this requires that we choose to stop following the congealing of attention into fabrications that lead to further contraction and inevitably, suffering.

Anzan Hoshin roshi says, in the series of classes on "The 8000 Line Prajnaparamita sutra":

Fear is the underlying mechanism of self-image, the attempt to reify reality in the most basic kind of way by simply freezing it and contracting. And the conventions of consensual experience or the experience of those who are unlearned, those who have not studied their experience, those who have not heard the Dharma, who have not practiced it, those whose lives are based on the understanding of a culture which is itself founded on contraction, will allow themselves to fall into that fear and will allow themselves to be held back by that fear from their own freedom.

What this points to is that we must wordlessly examine absolutely everything, taking nothing for granted: not who we think we are, not our memories, not what we think the body is, not what we think the mind is, not what our tendencies and habits tell us to do, not what our anger or fear is telling us to do. Any state you experience, any stance, any structure of attention you experience is not necessary. They are all recoil. They are all self-inflicted damage.

As the Roshi explained in Class 4 of the series "The Development of Buddhist Psychology:

All conditioned existence gives rise to dukkha or unsatisfactoriness, suffering, contraction, confusion; that this suffering, this dukkha, is fueled by the mechanism of grasping, of trying to hold on to something when it cannot be held and by continually misunderstanding the nature of our experience.

"Dukkha" does not describe one particular kind of state and the "suffering" isn't necessarily traumatic or dramatic. I mention this because sometimes students will describe a particular kind of state, such as boredom, as dukkha. For example, a student might describe a state of sinking mind, of disinterest, when what they really mean is boredom, and boredom is the result of stupidity klesa. In other words, boredom is a way of experiencing that is poisoned by a flattening of attention that you are fabricating, following, propagating. It is a kind of pouting that one is not being entertained. It is not as dramatic as the tantrums of anger or grasping. But it is still a childish tactic.

But dukkha refers to all  states which are the result of conditioned experience, and all states create suffering, unsatisfactoriness and bondage.

The roots of the Pali word "dukkha" are "jur" and "kha." "Bad" and "space". The root metaphor behind this is the hole in a wheel through which the axle passes being blocked. So the word means obstructed space.

We need to learn that the space of who we are, which is present as seeing and hearing and just the fact of experience is already open. When you are in a state, you think you have no choice about that, but the truth of the matter is that you are not choosing. You are following compulsion. Choose to actually practise and open attention and the axle will turn freely.

It's easy to cultivate states when you are sitting - states of boredom, states of calm, states of quiet, states of euphoria, shiny, shiny states. But all of these are dead ends because whatever is experienced within the state can only be the product of the state. The context is narrowed to the kind of content that suits it. And this is why such states can seem so convincing, and so compelling. This is why you fixate on them. There is no one who is better at lying to you than you are, and the thing that's convinced by the lie is the same thing that's doing the lying. It's not magic once you understand how the trick works. The states define who and what is imagined as a self but is really just a process of obstruction and fabrication.

In Zen practice, however, what we are doing is attending openly, rather than fixating. You can't 'fix' a state from inside of a state. You have to open around it and release it first. Anything you experience when attention is arranged in a structure (a state) is going to be biased and therefore cannot be true. Seeing these structures and learning to attend to them more and more openly with the whole of your experience is part of the many truths that zazen reveals. In the Class Six Outline in the series, "The Development of Buddhist Psychology", the Roshi said, The Buddha has clearly

seen that the root of dukkha was clinging to what&nbsp; could not be clung to. This clinging was the result of conceiving of the impermanent and dynamic exertion of experience to be a collection of real and permanent objects and entities, believing that this clinging will bring pleasure and satisfaction whereas it results only in suffering and confusion, and that what is selfless and beyond the personal is self and personal. The succession of these moments of grasping and confusion he called "samsara", the "flow". He called the cessation of this useless struggle and strategic approach to experience "nibbana", the "blowing out". In many places throughout the early texts, we find the Buddha again and again asking students to give up their spiritual and secular strategies and just understand something so obvious that it is often missed.

This is why we ask students to sit according to a schedule, why the Roshi has said so often that "the schedule IS Buddha". The dreaded committed sittings and the schedule you have promised to follow is important because you have to make choices that go beyond compulsion in order to do it. It is something in your life that will insist that you go further than your habits and tendencies dictate and can invite you into the world of the Buddhas. The world of the Buddhas is unfabricated and unborn and you arrive there by releasing yourself into it.

We sit zazen and we do this practice because moment after moment, we do not understand. Any snippets of understanding that come and go are not enough. We cannot afford to entertain ourselves with our states, our thoughts, our interpretations, our fabrications. These are all part of how we misunderstand and will not help us to clarify our understanding. We cannot afford to be lazy. So this morning and throughout this Dharma Assembly, please make the effort to really practise the richness of colours and forms and sounds, the nuance of sensations. Allow the whole bodymind to live as the brightness of seeing, the depth of sound, as ever-changing sensations, and as the Luminosity of experiencing as a whole, by opening all around, all at once.

## The Art of Subtraction

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, September 25th, 2009

How lightly can you do what you do? Whatever you do, is there something that can be subtracted so that it is more authentically what it is? When you pick up a cup, or turn a doorknob, or take care of your zafu, can you just do that without bringing any heavy-handedness to it, without doing it automatically, without "trying"?

The simplicity of Zen practice is the practice of things as they actually are. It is not an attitude or a stance or an affectation. It is not something extra. It is actually feeling the cup in your hand when you lift it. It is not doing something else at the same time, absent-mindedly turning a storyline this way and that in your mind whilst giving a minimal amount of attention to the cup, even if the story is that you are "being mindful". It is really paying attention to what you are doing.

Through being inattentive, the details of your life become a blur. You, your storylines, the objects and people around you, together with all of your issues and concerns and states and the stuff you need to do can become blurred together. You stop seeing the details of things as they are because when your attention becomes that fogged up, you don't realize how little attention you are really paying to anything. But your lack of attention shows itself in a myriad of ways and you can notice these and use the noticing of them to do something about the blurring. Your lack of attention is actually something you are adding to your life. Zen practice is learning how to subtract that and how to live in the life that zazen uncovers.

For example, when you leave a room, turn off the light. It's such a simple thing, but most of the time when you leave a light on it is because you are not really seeing what you are seeing. You're not seeing that the light is on. And why is that? What are you "seeing" instead? Thoughts about where you are going next, what you will be doing next? Let go of all of this nattering to yourself and turn off the light. But when you turn off the light, just turn it off. Don't then get into a storyline about how "green" you are or want to be, and how you should conserve and limit your use of energy and buy new recycling bins and wear shoes made out of rubber tires because all of this means something about you being a "good human being". Subtract all of that and just turn the light off. Let it be as simple as that. Just do this one thing and feel the hand as you do it. Subtract the sense of a "self" who is turning off the light and just turn it off.

In the words of the "Mahaprajnaparamita Hridaya sutra", as translated by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin:

There-fore, Sa-ri-putra,  
in emp-ti-ness, there is no form,  
no re-action, sym-b'lization, patt-ern-ing,  
nor con-scious-ness.

This of course is a reference to the five skandhas, which are a way of talking about how "otherness" happens; how you can seem to become separate from what is actually being experienced.

No eye, ear, nose, tongue, bo-dy, mind;  
no form, sound, smell, taste, touch,

nor what the mind takes hold of.

What this means is that, for example, is that the eye (e-y-e) does not need an "I". There is no "self" that sees. Seeing is not an idea of seeing. The word "eye" "e-y-e" and the word "I" as in "i" cannot see. The eye sees.

No ig-nor-ance, nor end of it,  
no de-cay and death,  
no end of de-cay and death.  
No suffering, no source of suffering,  
no ce-ssa-tion of suffering;  
no Path, no wis-dom,  
no a-ttain-ment, no non-a-ttain-ment.

All of these things are empty, and all ideas about these things are empty. They are empty of all of your thoughts and feelings about them.

Thus,  
Bo-dhi-sattvas have no a-ttain-ment,  
but just live in pra-jna-pa-ra-mita;  
un-ob-scured, and so with-out fear.  
Thus they real-ize com-plete re-lease.  
This is nirvana, the blowing out of the flames of passion, aggression, and ignorance.

How do you practise this? By really attending to what is being experienced without adding anything; by letting each thing stand out clearly, as it actually is, instead of covering over the details with your own fabrications.

So, when you use a piece of paper towel to dry your hands, scrunch it up before you throw it in the garbage can. Why? Because a garbage can hold many more pieces of scrunched up paper towels than it can unscrunched pieces. It's just common sense. The three-ply toilet paper you use comes from 100-year old trees. Do you really need three layers of a hundred-year old tree to wipe your butt?

Just look at what you use and how you use it. It doesn't need a storyline about you or about how "mindful" you are being. Flatten out cans and tins as much as you can. Tear up cardboard. Subtract laziness and thoughtlessness and take care of what you do by doing it fully.

Wash your cups and dishes and put them away after using them so that when you come back, you

have a nice clean cup and bowl to use. This is an act of compassion towards oneself and, in fact, towards others, because the tendency to blur and clutter and avoid taking care of simple details has become so commonplace that little is standing out for anyone and it creates more work for all of us.

Wash your cat's dishes. Don't just put another plate of food on the floor next to the one already encrusted with cat food. Use one bowl and clean it each time, before filling it. But when you do this, don't get into a storyline about all of the other stuff you "should" clean up and how much work that would be and how you already have too much to do. Just do this one thing and clean the cat's dishes. Clean the litter box instead of subjecting the poor cat to your laziness. Would you want to clamber about in a stinking mess in your bare feet? Don't you see that the states you indulge in that lead to such complete disregard of the obvious are something you are bringing to experiencing, something you are superimposing? Subtract that and taking care becomes obvious and simple and straightforward. It's not difficult. Most things are pretty obvious. If you don't fill in a tax return, you will not get a refund. If you don't take care of your teeth, they will fall out.

People usually have long lists of stuff they want to do, stuff they have to do, stuff they really don't want to do but know that they have to. And of these three categories, the last is where they will tend to procrastinate and blur. Subtract the blurring and procrastination by moving up the items that you know you have to do and really don't want to. Each day or each week schedule time to do something about those instead of ignoring them. If you regularly clean a room and find some things simple and easy, some things more complex, and you really, really don't want to clean the windows, choose a day to clean the windows as the first task you do.

Look into how you are prioritizing what you need to do and how you allow your states to influence your priorities and subtract the states. Just do what needs to be done without a storyline about how much you hate washing windows, or how "mindful" or "efficient" or "competent" you are because you washed the windows or about how this is going to change your whole life. Just clean the windows. Thoughts about what you are doing or how you are doing it or what this means relative to anything else are irrelevant. They might come up, but don't move attention towards them. Instead, stay with the simplicity of THIS thing you are doing.

Look at the space around you, your living space, the space you work in, the space of your car, the contents of the bags you carry around with you. What's in them that doesn't need to be there, and doesn't really serve a purpose? Subtract the clutter and you'll be able to find what you actually need and use. If you start looking around your living space with an eye to functionality, to what you actually use and how you use it, you can easily subtract most of this stuff so that it is easily maintained, everything has a place, and you know where it all is. Look for ways in which you can simplify and clarify how you arrange things around you.

Set up systems for yourself, such as a hook on which you always place your keys so you always know where they are. Get a white board and write down items that you use up so that you don't

have to try to remember what you don't have and need to buy. Learn from your experience. If there is a gap, a place in which you are allowing things to become blurry, are wasting time or wasting resources, clean it up by attending to what you actually do, how you confuse yourself, and subtract the confusion.

Dainen-ji, the monastery in which you sit today, is a very good example of the results of the art of subtraction. After we purchased this 135 year-old heritage building in 1996, we spent the first three months working round the clock, cleaning, renovating, and repairing it so that it would better reflect our practice. We filled two huge industrial-sized dumpsters with layer upon layer of flooring, drywall, bad carpentry, psychedelic wallpaper from the 60s and all manner of other debris. All of this debris came from the many years of layering that had been added to the building, the years and years of people covering the floors and walls and even the ceilings with their ideas. And when we stripped away all of this stuff that had piled up, what we found underneath was solid oak floors, beams that were six inches thick, wonderful craftsmanship from an era long gone that one no longer sees in this day and age. And much of what we have done since in refining the building is to simplify it further -- taking a jumble of rooms in the basement, for example, and turning them into clear and clean spaces; turning the kitchen and pantry into spaces that allow the activities that occur there to flow smoothly.

Similarly, if you subtract the complexity, the "extras" you bring to things - all the stuff and states and procrastination and idea-hampstering and cloudy thinking, you will uncover a simplicity in how you live that will much more closely align with what you are learning through your practise of zazen. But the information needed to do this comes first and foremost through sitting zazen. Sitting facing a wall in zazen is the direct way to practise the art of subtraction because there's nothing you can justify adding on to it. You have been given instructions and no matter how much you "try" to rework them, you keep finding yourself just sitting on a cushion watching your mind run down the wall. The practice of zazen is the practice of your life as it actually is and has nothing to do with your thoughts or feelings about it or about yourself or about the world. When you are sitting just sit, feeling into the sensations of the breath, opening to the sensations of the whole body sitting, opening to seeing and hearing.

If you are "trying" to sit, viewing the body as though it were something "other" that you have to do this practice thing to, subtract that. If you are heavy-handedly "trying" to sit up straight, "trying" to sit still, subtract that. What do you need to let go of to just sit up straight and sit still? It's not hard. It's actually the simplest thing in the world, but to do it you have to subtract all of the stuff you "try" to bring to it.

You let yourself pitch forward, slump, pull back and tighten. You do all sorts of things instead of just letting the bodymind sit straight and still. If you are slumping, what are you bringing to the experience of sitting that is causing you to slump? That is what you need to subtract by releasing it. Sit in balance point, allowing the skeletal frame rest on itself, and you'll find that this is simpler and easier than trying to fend off the forces of gravity that are causing you to pitch forward. If you

are pulling back, tightening, sitting as though you have steel rods up your spine, what are you bringing to the experience of sitting that is causing you to do that? That is what you need to let go of. Fidgeting, wiggling your toes, rocking with the breath, letting your eyes wander or your head jut forward, even the smallest of movements should be noticed because the movements of attention that are causing them need to be released. How do you release them? By really practising the balance and alignment of the posture, by feeling into the sensations of the breath and tanden and the whole bodymind sitting; by opening to peripheral vision and hearing. Release attention into the sensations, colours and forms and sounds. Let the mind BE the sensations and colours and forms and sounds.

If you were really just aligning yourself with the practice, you would just be sitting up straight, not moving, and the experience of sitting would be light, almost effortless, clear and bright. And this has NOTHING to do with your state of health or whether you are physically tired or whether your life is difficult or easy. Not pushing, not sinking, not holding or applying any kind of strategy, just sitting, feeling, seeing, hearing, attention fully engaged. But when you are not doing this, it is because there is a separation in your experiencing. You have separated yourself from what is actually going on. There is a sense of locatedness, a "you" who is tired, a "you" who is bored or confused or lost in thought pursuing ideas and storylines. This "you" is a contraction and distortion of attention into the sense of "self" and "other".

The five skandhas are a way of talking about how this "otherness" happens. In Sanskrit, the five skandhas are called the panca upadanaskhanda, the five binding groups. They are rupa (form), vedana (basic reactivity), samjna (symbolization), sankhara (habitual patterning), and vijnana (consciousness). The five skandhas are compulsive and occur through glossing over the details of experiencing: not noticing that a thought arises, dwells and decays; not hearing how a sound is actually heard. So the five skandhas refers to how experiencing is conditioned rather than how Knowing shows itself as what is known. And all depending on how closely we are looking at things, how much we attend to the details of things as they are, how subtle or how coarse our attention is, we experience things in different ways and the differences can seem to be worlds apart. Simple things can seem extraordinarily complex. Or simple things can be seen and understood to be simple.

The third skandha, symbolization (or sanna in Pali or samjna in Sanskrit) can also be translated as "perception". Symbolization skandha allows us to recognize and identify what we are experiencing.

In Class 13 of the Development of Buddhist Psychology series of Classes, Zen Master Anzan Hoshin says, and I quote:

In the Visudhimagga it says that its function is to make a sign as a condition for perceiving again that this is the same, as carpenters do in the case of timber, and so on. So just as a carpenter would make a mark on a board to show that this board is going to be cut in a certain way or used

in a certain way, so the perception skandha marks our experience, saying that this is much the same as that, so that the perception skandha then helps us to know which door to enter to go to the washroom and which door to enter in order to go to the bedroom. It allows us to clarify our situation a great deal.

On the other hand, this perception skandha can function in such a way that we are not actually experiencing what we are presently experiencing. We are only experiencing its similarity to what has been experienced previously. So in that way, if the perception skandha occurs in the context of that basic piling up, that heaping up of experience into unexamined continuities, then we are basically experiencing only what we have experienced, not what we are experiencing. We are experiencing our past so that if someone speaks to us in a certain tone of voice that triggers all kinds of memories and that also triggers all kinds of ways of reacting that have been encoded in relationship to a similar event. So that, if say when we are young and we are helping our father or mother doing something about the kitchen or about the house or working on the car, if we don't do things in quite the way that we are supposed to and they snap at us and this happens consistently, then later we might be thirty, forty, fifty years old but if we are trying to hang a picture and our wife or our husband is critical of how we are doing it, we become quite childish about all of that because once more, we feel as if we are a child. We feel as if that same situation is ongoing. And so we are experiencing our past rather than experiencing our present.

So therefore, it is very important for us to notice this skandha of perception when it is present. When we recognize something, what is that like? When you see snow, when you feel rain, when you stand up or when you sit down, are you really feeling it, are you really seeing it, are you really hearing it, or are you only experiencing your past? What does that actually feel like when that moment of marking comes in, when our experience becomes marked and labeled and split off and gathered in certain ways? What does that actually feel like? Can we recognize that as it is happening? I think that we can within practice.

We can notice when we are bringing something "extra" to experiencing, when we are complexifying, when we are cluttering up our own lives and cluttering up other people's lives. We can choose simplicity over cluttering; we can choose clarity over blurring. We can choose to live with intention instead of just allowing ourselves to be carried along by the momentum of compulsion. But we have to actually DO this.

The other day a student told me of a state of fear he had experienced that was very strong. He was on a bus when this state came up and seemed to envelop him in a big wave. He recognized it as a state and knew that he had to practise with it and so he was very busy trying to be mindful. But at a certain point he realized that the bus was emptying, that all of the passengers were getting off and realized that he hadn't heard the bus driver announce that they should all disembark. I laughed heartily when I heard this story, but not because I was enjoying a joke at his expense. I laughed with him because when a student begins to realize that mindfulness is not just

conjuring up an attitude to counter another attitude, "trying to be" this way or that, applying some strategy, but actually feeling, actually hearing, actually seeing, there can be the understanding that all that is needed is to practise the art of subtraction, to get out of the way so that experiencing can be experienced as it actually is. And that when we allow ourselves to do this, we are unobscured and so without fear.

So now, back to that cup. You might ask yourself how paying attention to the way you handle a cup is going to help you. After all, you have SO much to do, all kinds of confusing relationships, SO many demands on your time, decisions to make. You're always in a hurry, and often, as you say, you don't feel good. You just don't feel up to the challenge. It's too much work and compared to all of these other terribly important aspects of your life, it seems trivial and it's irritating to be reminded that you should feel the cup in your hand when all you want to do is down this coffee and get on with the next thing.

But, you see, you're going to get on with the next thing and the next thing and the next thing with the same disregard for detail. The cup is jumbled in with your thoughts, with other stuff you are doing. And the cup ends up jumbled in the sink with the jumble of other dishes while you go on to the jumble of other stuff you complain about being so jumbled, when all the while it's not that other stuff is jumbled, it's that YOU are jumbled. You've allowed it all to become piled up and you're not recognizing that experiencing has become conditioned through this piling up. That's why you're not feeling the cup in your hand.

What are you going to do about this? Obviously it makes no sense at all to allow such confusion to continue. What you need to do is learn the art of subtraction and practise it as often as you are able.

So, Prajnaparamita: EVERYBODY OUT OF THE POOL. Open to the fullness and richness of each moment and subtract anything you are adding.

Braising the Mind of the Way

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, November 23rd, 2002

I realize that some of you who came to attend the Dharma Assembly today may have thought that because the word "braising" appeared in the title of this Dharma Talk, and because I am tenzo or

head cook for the monastery, this would be something like a long cooking class. Sorry, but that is not what it is about. I am going to talk about food at a certain point, and we will be doing some kitchen work together, but that is not really the point of this Dharma Assembly. The point is our practice.

The title "Braising the Mind of the Way" plays with the wording of a traditional term, "raising the mind of the Way" which, of course, refers to giving rise to the mind of practice. "Braising" is a cooking term that refers to long, slow cooking in liquid, usually in a covered pot. For example, cooking meat at a simmer for many hours will cause the meat to become so tender that it falls off the bone. And so "Braising the Mind of the Way" refers to the long, thorough process of Zen practice and monastic training that over time will serve up a tender offering to feed all beings.

So this morning, we are going to start with some raw ingredients, not carrots and celery, but rather, the raw ingredients of our practice - the skin, meat and bones of our practice. It is through making use of these raw ingredients along with carrots and celery that we can learn to practice while cooking, and it is only if we practice in this way while cooking that we can make food that is an appropriate offering to the Sangha.

In Hotsu Mujoshin (which means 'Giving Rise to the Unsurpassable Mind') Eihei Dogen zenji says,

Practising zazen and learning the Way are raising the mind that seeks the Way. Arousing the mind which seeks the Way is not the same as zazen nor different from it, and zazen is neither the same as raising the mind which seeks the Way nor different from it; nor are they two or three things, nor are they different. You should study everything in this way.

The Dharma of luminous Awareness is not "out there" somehow separate from us, something that we need to attain. It is right here, right under our nose, all of the time. The practice of zazen is sometimes called "the practice of recognition" and what it is that we come to recognize is that each and every moment is Dharma; each moment of experiencing is Dharma. We have never, can never be separate from the Dharma. And yet it can appear that way to us.

Right now we are sitting in zazen in the Hatto at Dainen-ji. The room itself is spacious and orderly and the only objects in it are those associated with our practice. The room is very reflective of our practice, which continuously points to the context in which all things arise: the vastness and openness of our Experiencing. The room, all of the objects within it, the forms of our practice including the posture of zazen itself invite us and remind us to practice.

Yet instead of making use of the opportunity we are given, we will tend to fill up the space of our experiencing with our thoughts and feeling tones and interpretations about who we are, who everyone else is, what the world is. We tell ourselves stories about the past, the future, about our hopes and fears and dreams, and plans, the slights we have suffered at the hands of others, the knots and tangles of our lives as we perceive them.

Now it is not that we need to cut any of this off. In fact, we can't. Thoughts are what thinking does and of course thoughts will come up while we are sitting. But we can know that these are only thoughts and that they make up the very smallest part of our experiencing. To know that, of course, we have to at least be able to stay in the room, to practice environmental mindfulness. How do we know where we are and what is going on? By paying attention to the sensations of the bodymind that inform us that we are not having a conversation with someone, we are sitting on a zafu. By paying attention to the colours and forms that tell us that we are in this room, not in the internalized landscapes of imagery that form and reform in our minds. By paying attention to the sounds we are hearing with our ears instead of listening to the endless babble of internalized discursiveness.

To practice clearly when we are not sitting, we must be able to practice clearly while sitting on a zafu. We must be able to stay with what is actually going on in the space we are in, instead of allowing thoughts and feelings to eclipse our experiencing. So we practice releasing patterns of thought and feeling as soon as we notice them. They may continue for a time even after we begin practicing with them, but if we continue to practice, they dissipate of their own accord. It is not necessary to cut off thoughts and feelings while sitting. What we need to do instead is open around them so that the energy of the thoughts and feelings can begin to open to our lives as a whole, to our own benefit and the benefit of those around us.

If we practice this during formal zazen, then it becomes possible to practice with habitual patterns that come up the rest of the time. For instance, we might be at work and notice a certain state beginning to form. But then we need to recognize that this is no different from a state that appeared while we were sitting and we were able to release it. So why pursue it now? Through these moments of recognizing that a feeling is a feeling, a thought is a thought, a state is a state, regardless of where we are when it is taking place, we can begin to understand how it is possible to practice continuously.

In the opening lines of Gyoji, Eihei Dogen zenji says,

In the great Way of the Awakened Ancestors the most important thing has always been continuous practice. Beginningless, endless, and seamless, there is not even the slightest gap between rousing the mind which seeks the Way, practice, Awakening, and nirvana. Continuous practice is an endless wheel turning. It is not forced out by your own effort or someone else's effort. Continuous practice is stainless.

To practice while standing, walking in kinhin, or going about any of the countless tasks we do each day, we must practice in exactly the same way we practice while sitting on a zafu. Getting lost in thought, or identifying with this or that state while stirring a pot is no different from getting lost in thought or identifying with a state while sitting. Our tendency to view the world from within an internalized interpretation of what is going on around us blurs and muddies our lives, prevents us

from being able to see clearly what is really going on around us. Viewing a meal we are preparing from within an internalized interpretation of what it is and whom we are making it for will blur and muddy the food we prepare in the same way. Recognizing when thoughts and feeling-tones are conditioning our experience and releasing them is the essence of our practice and this is no different when sitting on a zafu or doing anything else. But often when we are reminded of our practice outside of formal practice, we will notice only the most superficial details of our experiencing. This is how students will sometimes mistake the enjoyment of having felt the breeze stir their hair while standing on a beach for mindfulness; or mistake feeling the rhythmic movement of muscles while riding a bicycle for mindfulness. The practice of mindfulness is much more than feeling the most obvious sensations of the body. Feeling the sensations of the body to some extent is necessary just to function. But the practice goes much further than that. It is not a matter of noticing this or that sensation and focusing attention on them so that they seem to stand out with more vividness than is usually the case. Those sensations are included, but we continue to open attention around them to a much wider range of sensations and feel into the whole of the body - not just the bits that are the feeling of the breeze or the legs moving on a bicycle. Feeling whole bodily, we also open attention to our seeing and hearing, to open to the context of our experiencing. The context of our experiencing is the space in which we arise and which we each arise as.

Our formal practice of zazen, of kinhin, bowing, chanting and so on is much more than a remedy for our states. As we penetrate deeper into the practice we find that these are ways of embodying and actualizing the space of experiencing. How do we penetrate deeper into the practice? By actually practising. And as our formal practice deepens, our informal practice opens out as well.

For the tenzo, working in the kitchen is not different from kinhin, chanting, bowing, or zazen. As Dogen says in the Tenzo kyokun,

Since ancient times this office has been held by realized monks who have the mind of the Way or by senior disciples who have roused the Way-seeking mind. This work requires exerting the Way.

Now I would like to talk a little about the function of tenzo and the relationship of this post to monastic training and the practice. So first of all, why is there a tenzo? Well, obviously because we need to eat and so someone has to prepare our food. But there is more to it than that.

The first monks were students of Sakyamuni Buddha, a ragtag group of people who followed along behind him as he wandered through the forests of India. There were no monasteries, no facilities where people could go to sit. A monastic was someone who literally left home, leaving behind all of the comforts and conveniences of family life, in order to dedicate themselves entirely to the study and practice of the Dharma, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

They were not permitted to work and they did not grow or prepare their own food. They ate once a day from food that was placed in a begging bowl by laypeople. So it would not be an uncommon

sight to see monks wandering from house to house begging for their food. They had no choice about what was placed in their bowl and were required to eat whatever was provided through the generosity of the lay community and this included meat. Whatever was placed in one's bowl was gratefully received and it simply was not done to refuse a certain food because it was spicy or had meat in it, or was slightly off. Monks ate whatever they were given regardless of whether they liked it or not because there was no other source of food and this was the one meal of the day.

Over time the community of practitioners grew and it became necessary to house them. And so began the first monasteries. With the growth of these communities it also became necessary to grow food and prepare meals because...well, imagine 300 hungry monks descending on a village carrying begging bowls.

From India, the Teachings were carried to China and from there, to Japan. As Buddhism flourished throughout Asia, there were many splits and divisions within various schools that resulted in a large number of different sects, each with their own style of presentation, ways of organizing the Teachings, and ways of taking care of the day-to-day business of running a monastery.

The day-to-day business of running a monastery required extensive organization. And so traditionally there were six offices held by senior students who had roused the Way-seeking mind and were charged with guiding the activities of Awakening the community. Dogen says of this,

The roku chiji or six offices of a Zen monastery in Dogen's time were tsusu, or administrator; kansu, or assistant administrator; fusu or treasurer; ino or disciplinarian; tenzo, or chief cook in charge of meals and supplies; and the shissui, or work leader in charge of caretaking.

Those serving in these training posts were required to adhere to a set of standards known as the Zen Monastic Standards: Chanyuan Qinggui, an important ten-volume work by Changlu Zongze, published in 1102/3. These standards are upheld by the Office of Tenzo to this day, although how they are interpreted will vary within the various traditions of Buddhism.

Dogen zenji brought new life to monastic training because he presented all aspects of it as a means of deepening and clarifying one's understanding of practice. Every aspect of our practice, from how the floors were washed during samu (caretaking practice), how food is handled and prepared, how we hold our bowls, our koan practice, the Transmission between Teacher and student as Buddha and Buddha...every activity, every task, every exchange was viewed as being important.&nbsp;

He wrote extensively about all of this in a massive volume entitled Shobogenzo: the Treasury of the Eye of Reality. Other essays were scattered in single folio editions. Of these, two essays provide the basis of training concerning the preparation and handling of food: The Tenzo kyokun: Instructions for the Tenzo and the Fushukuhanpo: How to Use Your Bowls.

Dogen zenji's profound and practical instructions on cooking and eating in the Zen monastic training environment provide everyone everywhere with teachings on how to use ourselves and our daily lives to prepare and serve the feast of Reality.

The work done by the tenzo is considered to be equal to other activities within our practice. It is zazen in movement, It is Hotsu bodaishin - giving rise to the mind that seeks and finds the Way, unfolding our recognition of openness and embodying it while sitting, or while preparing food.

As is stated in the Zen Monastic Standards, the mandate of the Office of the Tenzo is this:

Putting the mind of the Way to work, serve carefully varied meals appropriate to each occasion and thus offer everyone the opportunity to practice without hindrance.

And Dogen zenji says,

In the past such great masters as Guishan Lingyu, Dongshan Shouchu and others have served in this post. Although this is a matter of preparing and serving meals, the tenzo is not just the "cook".

When I began training as tenzo at Zazen-ji some 10 years ago, I soon discovered that there was much more to preparing and serving food in this context than I could have guessed. Every aspect of my training was and is still overseen by Anzan Hoshin roshi. The degree of planning, attention to detail, the variables that must be considered to meet the needs of a large group of students requires many hours of work on the part of Roshi, myself as tenzo, and monastics training as tenzo-anja or assistants to the tenzo.

Roshi usually does the meal planning or menu design. The basic format of the meals served is based on our practice of oryoki. In oryoki practice we use a set of three nested bowls. An example of this would be a meal traditionally served during sesshin: rice sprinkled with sesame seeds, miso shiru with silken tofu, and a pickle dish. Each dish complements the other dishes. The rice combined with the sesame seeds and the miso in the soup along with the tofu make a complete protein. Miso shiru is also made with seaweed stock and is served with fresh greens, so it includes the nutrients of fresh vegetables as well as the minerals of the seaweed. The pickle is served as a digestive aid. The colours and shapes of each ingredient used create an aesthetically pleasing and visually appetizing meal. The food is light and nourishing, appropriate for students sitting in zazen.

Meals prepared for retreatants or residents at Dainen-ji are planned in a similar fashion, based on the three bowls of oryoki. All of the food served is vegetarian - not because there is any particular "rule" that excludes meat from our diet, but because everyone can eat vegetarian food. Those who need to supplement their diet with fish or meat due to illness or allergies can do so privately as this would be considered a form of 'medicine' according to the Shobogenzo Zuimonki.

The first consideration for meal planning is the protein complement; the second is the carbohydrate and, of course, how these will combine to further complete the protein, how the ingredients will look, the kind of mouth-feel that they will provide, the colour combinations, and so forth are also looked into. In upholding the standards of the Office of the Tenzo, we make use of the widest range of ingredients available and our diet is always varied. Roshi will not design the same meal twice in a row. There will always be different ingredients combined even in a standard dish, such as scalloped potatoes.

The greens used are often Asian greens rather than the more common Western hybrid vegetables, which have been bred to appear a certain way. For example, Roshi would choose Chinese broccoli, which is closer to broccoli in a wild form, with thin stalks, small heads and edible leaves, rather than the broccoli with an enormous plume of flower standing on a thick woody stalk available in supermarkets and ubiquitous in western cooking. This does not mean we would not use the hybrid form of broccoli if Chinese broccoli were not available. But Chinese broccoli is available and we use it because we want to encourage people to continue to grow it, lest the world be taken over by woody stalks with gigantic green plumes on them. We also want people to have a diverse and interesting diet. The choices we make concerning the procurement of ingredients take many perspectives into account. This is not about frowning with disdain on certain foods because we do not like them. In fact, in the Tenzo Kyukun, Dogen zenji says,

In preparing food, never view it from the perspective of usual mind or on the basis of feeling-tones. Taking up a blade of grass, erect magnificent monasteries; turn the Wheel of Reality within a grain of dust. If you only have wild grasses with which to make a broth, do not disdain them. If you have ingredients for a creamy soup, do not be delighted. Where there is no attachment, there can be no aversion. Do not be careless with poor ingredients and do not depend on fine ingredients to do your work for you, but work with everything with the same sincerity. If you do not do so, then it is like changing your behaviour according to the status of the person you meet; this is not how a student of the Way is.

Strengthen your resolve and work whole-heartedly to surpass the monks of old and be even more thorough than those who have come before you. Do this by trying to make as fine a soup for a few cents as the ancients would make a coarse broth for the same amount.

In Dogen zenji's day, there was no need to choose between hybrid vegetables and those that are closer to their original form, so Dogen doesn't say anything about broccoli. In fact he doesn't really comment on the process of making choices as such. But what he does say throughout the Tenzo kyokun is that we should do our best. So the ingredients we choose should be and are given careful consideration.

When preparing the vegetables or ingredients for the soup, which have been received from the

office, do not disparage the quantity or quality but instead handle everything with great care. Do not despair or complain about the quantity of the materials. Throughout the day and night, practice the coming and going of things as arising in the mind, the mind turning and displaying itself as things.

Each moment of choice, each decision made, is an opportunity to raise the mind of the Way. Reaching for a spoon, stirring a pot, adding salt, tasting, is an opportunity to practice opening to our capacity to feel, taste, touch, smell and hear. Standing at the sink washing a dish is an opportunity to feel our posture, to notice movements of attention that would ordinarily carry us into discursiveness and release them, to pay attention to the task at hand.

Working in the kitchen with Roshi is a continuous reminder of our practice. This is not at all like 'working in a kitchen' in a restaurant, or especially at 'home'. There is no casual talk, though there can be laughter. While the kitchen in a home is often a gathering place for social interaction, the kitchen here at Dainen-ji is a place to gather together body, breath, speech, and mind and release them in expressing the Way moment to moment to benefit those who are practising the Way.

As Roshi warned me, it took me about 10 years to learn how to make a miso shiru, a miso soup, that had a depth that Roshi approved of. Much of that was because when I began learning how to make it, I had a set idea of how it should taste. Set ideas about how a dish should taste obscure how it actually tastes, and make it dull and uninteresting. To cook well, one cannot follow one's own agenda any more than one can follow one's own agenda while practicing. &nbsp;We have to completely let go of all sense of "me" cooking the soup and how the soup 'should' taste. The only way to make a wonderful soup, I discovered, was to allow each pot of soup to be completely different from the last, to taste how it actually tasted and allow the soup itself to tell me what it needed. But it took a long time to learn how to let go of wanting to follow a pre-conceived notion and let things be as they actually were. This is an example of how my practice informed my cooking and my cooking informed my practice.

During a sesshin, I would make the soup and before it was served Roshi would come into the kitchen to see how things were going. Normally he would walk to the stove, look down into the pot of soup, smell the steam and then reach into the cupboard above the stove for this ingredient and that to balance the flavours. He never tasted the soup because he knew from the smell alone exactly what it needed and he was always right. Now he comes into the kitchen from time to time, to create a last-minute pickle dish, or put the finishing touches on something that I have prepared, but the soup is usually fine.

So, having said quite a bit about the history and role of tenzo, I am going to talk about what all of this actually has to do with you.

In a little while we will go down to the kitchen to work together on some of the food preparation for our supper. When we do this, we will begin at the beginning.

We will begin by facing the Idaten-Sonten Kamidan , which stands on the shelf mounted in the window. A Butsudan, like the one in the Hatto, is a platform of Awakening. It raises up for us a statement about Awakening so that we can recognize and respond to it. A Kamidan is a platform for kami. What is a kami? The root of the word "ka" refers to fire; "mi" refers to water. So "Kami" refers to the meeting together of fire and water, the co-existence together of opposites, an unlikely and vivid circumstance. It is a way of talking about the vividness of what is. Idaten is a kami that traditionally is associated with the kitchen and the provisions of the monastery. I will lead a chant to Idaten Sonten, as follows:

On Ida Teta Moka Teta So Wa Ka

Following that, we will clap twice, hopefully in unison. The reason for the claps is that kami are associated with Shintoism and traditionally one claps twice to summon kami. This is a way of getting Idaten Sonten's attention while simultaneously summoning our own attention.

Then we will begin to talk about how to prepare our workspace. This is something you can apply at home. To work clearly, you need a clear workspace. Clear away from your immediate work area anything that is not relevant to the task at hand. At Dainen-ji we always begin by laying out cutting boards, knives, aprons, a bowl for scraps and a clean damp cloth to keep surfaces and tools clean. It doesn't matter if you are making a meal for one or you are going to feed 30 or 300 people, start by setting up your work space. This is stage one.

Stage two is to retrieve the ingredients you will be working with. But don't clutter up your workspace with a sea of ingredients. Put them to one side.

There is a French culinary term that we make use of because it accurately describes all of the preliminary preparations that we need to make in order to cook well - *Mise en place* . This means, literally translated, "Everything in its place". It includes setting up the work area with tools, gathering ingredients together and cutting various ingredients before beginning to cook.

So stage three would be the cutting of ingredients. All depending on what you are cooking, you can do all of the cutting in advance, or cut ingredients and begin cooking them while continuing to cut other ingredients, adding them as needed since they will take different amounts of time to cook. Whichever way you do it, your workspace should remain uncluttered and orderly. Put away what you are finished with. Stop periodically to stand back from your work area and look at how things are arranged. If your work area becomes disorganized, it is an expression of your own discursiveness. So use the noticing of that to reinitiate your practice and to clean up after yourself as you go along.

As concerns the cutting of ingredients - sometimes students think that working mindfully means

slowing down. This is not true. In fact, if you are truly mindful, you can work much more quickly than would ordinarily be the case. Let's take as example, peeling a carrot with a vegetable peeler. To do that one task thoroughly and completely does not take a lot of time. But if we become heavy-handed and ponderous in our attempt to peel the carrot and be mindful at the same time, it can take a VERY long time. When we work at a task in that way, it is rather like watching a videotape of ourselves peeling a carrot. There is a self-consciousness to it that slows everything down. Rather than doing that, consider the tool you have in one hand, the carrot in the other. Feel the breath, feel the body, feel the hands; open the peripheral vision and just let the peeler peel the carrot. Stay out of the way. The bodymind knows how to do this simple task. It doesn't need anyone to oversee things.

When planning out your own meals at home, you will first need to look at what you already have on hand and give some thought as to how you are going to use up fresh ingredients and what you may need to purchase. And it can be helpful to install a white board on a wall in your kitchen, as we have at Dainen-ji. When we are getting low on an ingredient or throw out an empty container, we write it down on the white board instead of committing it to the fickleness of memory.

Make a decision as to the style of cooking you will employ - whether it be western, South-western, Japanese, Chinese, Southeast Asian, Indian, Middle-eastern or some other style. Then plan the protein complement of your meal, followed by the carbohydrate. By carbohydrate I am including both starches such as potatoes or squash and grains, along with whatever vegetables you are going to use. All of these are carbohydrates. If you are preparing a vegetarian meal, you should be familiar with the quantities of protein in such items as tofu, wheat gluten, nuts, seeds, and dairy products. Some of them have much less protein than most people think and are better eaten in combination with other foods to raise the amount of protein in the dish.

There is a wide array of foods available that will provide protein for vegetarian dishes or may be combined with other ingredients to raise the protein complement. If you only ever eat cotton or firm tofu, try silken tofu. If you visit some of the Asian stores in your community you may find triangles or squares of deep-fried or age tofu, deep-fried puff tofu; tofu cut into ribbons to resemble noodles; products made with yuba, or soymilk skin. Chinese shops also sell high-protein tinned wheat gluten, which just needs seasoning. Soba, or buckwheat noodles, provide a complete protein by themselves.

Combining grain with nuts or seeds, beans or legumes will create a complete protein. It is easy enough to ensure that you are including an adequate quantity of protein in your diet if you spend a little time planning your meals. And please, take the time once in a while to browse through Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Arab, Israeli, Italian stores - to name a few - in your area that carry ingredients that you may never have heard of but find absolutely wonderful.

Try to vary your diet as much as you are able. If you only ever eat three kinds of vegetables, make it four or ten or three hundred. These are some of the fruits and vegetables we use at Dainen-ji:

Red and green bell peppers, cubanelle and poblano peppers; kale, watercress, red and green Swiss chard, spinach, broccolini, rappini, broccoli, asparagus, green cabbage, savoy cabbage, nappa cabbage, red cabbage, radicchio, butternut squash, acorn squash, kobacha squash, occasionally eggplant and zucchini; plum tomatoes, vine-ripened tomatoes, English cucumber, Japanese cucumber, middle-eastern cucumber, Kirby cucumbers; Chinese long beans, wax beans, peas; dai gai choy, su choy, yu choy, Shanghai bok choy, ong choy, tong choy or chrysanthemum greens, pea sprouts, baby bok choy, bean sprouts, celery root also known as celeriac, Chinese celery, celery, fennel, leeks, scallions, garlic, shallots, white onions, red onions, Spanish onions, Vidalia onions, huagu, which are Chinese flower mushrooms, shitake mushrooms, straw mushrooms, cremini mushrooms, lobster mushrooms, morel mushrooms, chanterelle mushrooms, porcini mushrooms, button mushrooms, gypsy mushrooms, honey mushrooms, fairy ring mushrooms, maitake mushrooms, which are also known as pine mushrooms, daikon or Chinese white radish, lo bak or Chinese green radish, gau, jicama, escarole, beets and beet greens, Romaine lettuce, Boston lettuce, red leaf lettuce, green leaf lettuce, chicory, and endive. Sweet potatoes, white potatoes, red potatoes, Yukon gold potatoes. Rutabaga, turnip, parsnips, horseradish, carrots, occasionally cauliflower, ancho chillies, jalapeno, chipotle, aji chillies, Thai bird chillies, chilhuacle Negro, limes and lemons, a range of olives, artichoke hearts, palm hearts.

I could make a similar list for beans, grains, nuts and seeds, spices and seasonings, cheeses, herbs, breads, and the dozens of shapes of pasta that are available. Perhaps another time.

We are so fortunate to have access to such a wonderful array of foods that provide us with almost limitless choices. When you go to a supermarket, practice. Feel the step, feel your hand holding the plastic basket or pushing the cart. Feel the body, open to the hearing; open your peripheral vision. With your peripheral vision open, you are much more likely to find the one almost perfect tomato in amongst the 500 or so in a bin; you will notice ingredients tucked away on shelves that you may have walked past for years. If you want to shop well, you need your capacities to feel, see, hear, smell, touch, and taste to be as open as possible. And it doesn't matter if you are shopping for a tomato or making a choice about something you see on a Web site. If you are not practising, you will tend to default to habit. If you are practising, you will make more intelligent decisions and be more willing to explore.

We can start anywhere, with anything, to make use of the tasks that we do to widen and deepen our practice. To go back to an earlier quote from Dogen zenji,

Practising zazen and learning the Way are raising the mind that seeks the Way. Arousing the mind which seeks the Way is not the same as zazen nor different from it, and zazen is neither the same as raising the mind which seeks the Way nor different from it; nor are they two or three things, nor are they different. You should study everything in this way.

So now, sitting here facing the wall, arouse the mind which seeks the Way in your formal practice of zazen. Don't waste time watching internalized home movies about what you think your life is. Try something new. Pay attention to your life as it is, first by opening your attention to the sensations of the body, the colours and forms and sounds. Open around the thoughts and feelings that come up to practice aligning with this moment of present experiencing. It is through practicing this that you can learn to apply the Teachings while doing everything else that you do. If you can't sit on a zafu for half an hour without getting completely lost in thought, how are you going to cook a meal or do anything else without getting lost in thought? Open around the thoughts and feelings that come up, not as a way of trying to get rid of them, but to give them context. If we only ever choose what is most habitual for us, the staleness of the same thoughts and feelings and storylines that we go over and over and over even though we already know them all, this is a bit like sitting down at a banquet table laid with a wonderful feast. But instead of participating, we do not even look up. We sit clutching a plastic Tupperware container filled with three-day old macaroni and cheese and pick at it with a plastic fork. Look up, open your field of view. Practice in this moment.

In closing, I would like to thank Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi for the years of training he has given me, for his guidance in planning this Dharma Assembly and for his translation of Dogen zenji's Tenzo Kyokun and Fushukuhanpo, under the title Cooking Zen.

Have a good morning. I'll see you later in daisan and in the kitchen.

## Centres

The White Wind Zen community has four centres providing a venue for authentic Zen practice which are all maintained under the direction of Zen Master Anzan Hoshin:

Zen Centre of Ottawa (Honzan Dainen-ji)

Guelph Zazenkaï&nbsp;

Wolfville Zazenkaï

Harrow Zazenkaï

## Zen Centre of Ottawa (Honzan Dainen-ji)

The Zen Centre of Ottawa is the main centre and training monastery of the White Wind Zen Community. Located in a 9,700 sq. ft. heritage building in Ottawa's Sandy Hill district, the Zen Centre, also known by its monastic name, Honzan Dainen-ji, provides an environment for authentic monastic and lay Zen practice. The main practice areas of the monastery include the first floor Zendo, second floor Hatto (Dharma Hall), a Shuryo (Study Hall) with a large library, Undo (Cloud Hall) for public retreats and residential training in the completely refurbished basement, and space for monastic and lay residents on the third floor.

[View daily schedule](#)

240 Daly Avenue  
Ottawa, Canada  
K1N 6G2  
613-562-1568  
[Contact by email](#)

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## Guelph Zazenkai

The practice hall of the Guelph Zazenkai is now located close to the the city centre and is more accessible to practitioners. This replaces the Guelph Barndo which was located on a farm at the outskirts of the city and had been established in 2013. The Zazenkai now has a "sho" (brushwork) from the Roshi as well as further practice materials from Honzan Dainen-ji in Ottawa. Anyone wishing to learn to practise mindfulness through zazen, kinhin, and other traditional Zen practices or Dharma students visiting the area can schedule a meeting with Ven. Chunen Rampal angya by sending an email to [info@wwzc.org](mailto:info@wwzc.org) Apartment 102, 351 Eramosa Road Guelph Ontario. N1E 2N1

[View daily schedule](#)

&nbsp;

## Wolfville Zazenkai

In August 1990, Michael Zenki Hope-Simpson (now anagarika) received authorization to establish a branch practice group in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. The Wolfville Zazenkai ("gathering together for zazen") provides an opportunity for branch members to participate in the foundations of mindfulness practice and possibly to prepare for more intensive training at Dainen-ji. Sittings are held twice weekly, on Thursday nights and Sunday mornings at our Knowlan Mountain Zendo located a few miles outside of Wolfville. The Zendo features a beautiful Mu sho brushed by the Roshi on translucent plexiglass that hangs in front of a window above the Butsudan.

[View daily schedule](#)

382 Knowlan Mountain Road RR #1

Wolfville, Nova Scotia

Canada

B4P 2R1

(902)-385-2219&nbsp; or (902)-691-4286

[Contact by email](#)

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Harrow Zazenkai

The main activity at Harrow Zazenkai is sitting - zazen. And in this context we also unfold the forms of kinhin, chanting, listening to teisho and dharma talks. We have General Sittings on Monday evenings and Formal Sittings on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday mornings and Friday evenings. Practice interviews are regularly available with Dharma Teachers and practice advisors at Dainen-ji by telephone and email. We also have the opportunity for face to face interviews with visiting practice advisors. Other sitting times and instruction in sitting posture are available by appointment. If you are interested in practicing at Harrow Zazenkai, please contact us.

[View daily schedule](#)

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[View Harrow Zazenkai in a larger map](#)

Choice

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, April 28th, 2007

Very often in daisan I am asked about choices. Students sometimes ask about relationship problems, about work problems, about money problems, and all manner of other problems. I offer practical suggestions, but I know this isn't the answer to their problems. The fact of the matter is that no sooner than you find a solution to one problem, another springs up in its place. And this will continue until you begin to understand that as long as you live your life without intention, there will be trouble. Very often when students are discussing their problems, they already recognize to some extent what they need to do and what they are asking me in essence is, "How can I open past this... without changing anything?" This is like building a brick wall in the middle of the road and then complaining that it's in the way.

The truth of the matter is that we do have choice. We have choice in our relationships, in our work, in everything that we do. More importantly, in each moment we can choose to open to reality or close ourselves from it by contracting attention. But can closing ourselves off from reality really be considered a choice? As Anzan Hoshin roshi has often said, "Only the choice to open is a choice. Anything else is just compulsion."

When we act in a certain way, this creates pre-dispositions for the same act to occur again. If you ignore the dirty dishes in the sink, it becomes easier to do that a second time and a third time and if you continue in this way, ignoring a sink full of dirty dishes becomes habitual. It becomes "normal" to you. But habituation is not limited to such things as ignoring the dishes. Throughout our waking hours the tendency to engage in an endless flow of storylines and states about ourselves, about other people, about the world is also habitual. If we propagate a sense of problem, a feeling-tone of sadness or resentment or loneliness or whatever the flavour of the day is, each time that we engage in it we deepen it and attention will keep turning to it. To make matters worse, our responses to our states, the "methods" we use to try to avoid or jolly ourselves out of a state we don't like or grasp after or prolong a state we do like serve to deepen our habits. As this is what people tend to do to themselves, the relationships people form with each other are often based on mutual agreements concerning enabling and propagating states they like or relying on one another to interrupt or distract them from states they don't like. This might seem comfortable and convenient but it becomes simply a way of avoiding ever having to take responsibility for oneself.

It is the acting out of pre-dispositions that makes up what we are as personalities. Anzan Hoshin roshi translates the term "karma" as following the "momentum of tendency" or we could say "following compulsion". In a manner of speaking, these habits make up the "default settings" of our personalities. These "defaults" are the "endless blind passions" referred to in the Four Great Vows which spring from the grasping and avoidance that comes from ignoring reality. Attention distorts and contracts into a swirl of thoughts and feelings which distract and confuse us and when this happens we believe that this swirling is an inherent part of the process of making a choice. What we do not realize is that all of these swirling thoughts and feelings about the issue have nothing to do with clarifying anything at all and in fact, will compromise our ability to think intelligently. Defaulting to habit is not making a choice; it is simply following compulsion.

It can be very difficult for us to know the difference between making a choice and following a compulsion although obviously the distinction is very important. We find it difficult to tell the difference because we believe that decisions are made at the level of thoughts and feelings when in reality, making a choice occurs in the process of mind-moments that comprise perception and cognition. And the process is very simple. If we allow it to be simple. But the more that we clutter up the space of experiencing with the habitual swirling of thoughts and feelings, the more complex the process becomes.

When people need to make a decision about something, they tend to believe that they have to really, really think about the matter. There is a very big difference between intelligent thinking and just having a lot of thoughts or feeling tones about a decision. Having a lot of thoughts or feeling tones is not clear thinking, it is just having a lot of thoughts. It is just roiling around in thoughts and feeling tones. Intelligent thinking does not require abstracting oneself from bodily sensation, from colours and forms and sounds. There is no reason why you cannot think about something and at the same time feel into the sensations of the bodymind and open to the context in which you and everything else is actually taking place. In fact, if you are not feeling the body, your thinking will already be skewed because you are leaving out most of what you are. Attention gathers in the area of the head and you get lost in thought. This is not intelligent thinking.

The bodymind does everything that you think that "you" do. Whether you are walking, talking, sitting zazen, working on your computer or finally washing that sink full of dirty dishes, it is not "you" that does any of this, but the hands, the eyes, the whole bodymind and the mental factors needed to carry out the task. When you get lost in thought and drift this way and that in feeling-tones, you have forgotten everything that is most true of your experiencing - that you are right here, right now, and the thinking is taking place in the context of right here, right now. How can you possibly think straight when it is like this?

Making a choice is a very, very simple thing and occurs very quickly - in less than the space of time it takes for a raindrop to hit the top of your head and for you to say, "Oh. Rain". Before the moment of choice and after the moment of choice, you can make things very, very complicated for yourself by bringing all kinds of thoughts and feeling tones into it, and you can seem to slush it all down or fragment attention into seemingly endless interpretations, but the choice itself is very quick.

Take for example something as simple as sitting. It's time to sit and you know that. But you start talking to yourself about how much you really don't feel like doing that, and how complicated and difficult it is. The decision was already made to sit and now it is time to do it. You know this. But instead of simply following through with what you know to be true, you cover over what you already know by talking to yourself about how difficult it is. If you stop talking to yourself about how difficult it is for a moment and simply pay attention to your experiencing as it actually is, you could open past this state. Is it difficult to put one foot in front of the other and walk to the zafu? No. Is it

difficult to sit down? No. Is it difficult to sit up straight for 30 minutes? No. So what's difficult? Just the state that says "difficult, difficult". Instead of listening to a state, would it not be more intelligent to pay attention to your experiencing as it actually is? Yes, but it's easier to ignore what you know to be true. And ignoring is an old habit, isn't it?

If you don't open to the inherent wisdom of the whole bodymind while you are in the process of making a decision, your decisions will be skewed because they are not grounded in anything but your thoughts and feelings. This is why people have such difficulty doing what they say they will do or following through with anything. It's that ignoring that makes it possible for you to stroll past the sink full of dishes along with an untold number of other tasks and responsibilities that you know you should take care of but don't. It's why you procrastinate, why you leave things unfinished, why your life seems so fraught with problems. You make resolutions that you rarely if ever follow through with. And you make impossible promises, such as "I take you to be my (wife/husband), to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish; from this day forward until death do us part". How can you actually follow through with a vow to love someone every day until you die when you can be so completely hoodwinked by a state about sitting for 30 minutes and forget that this is something you promised to do?

At Dainen-ji, a great deal of emphasis is placed on making choices. Beginning students are required to make the choice to sit 30 minutes once a week on the same day, at the same time and cannot apply as students of our Lineage unless they demonstrate that they are doing this. You can have all the aspiration in the world, could have read every book there is to read on the subject of Buddhism, but none of that means anything if you cannot follow through with making the choice to sit. One of the first things beginning students discover about practicing Zen is that a deliberate choice has to be made to sit each time they sit. Although 30 minutes a week is less time than most people spend completely lost in thought over a cup of coffee each day, following through with this commitment can seem very difficult for someone learning to practice and this is because practicing according to a schedule means not following the momentum of tendency and instead choosing to sit with intention. Writing a letter of application to the Roshi requires making a choice. Attending sittings at the monastery each week requires making a choice. In doing all of this, it becomes clear that doing something is very different from thinking about doing something.

An associate student who wishes to apply as a general student must choose to sit every day and maintain this daily effort for a period of two or three months before they can apply. Each day they have to renew their intention as students and make the choice to sit whether they feel like sitting or not. And this is very important because feelings change all of the time and if you only ever sit when you feel like sitting, you're still to a large extent following compulsion. When people make the commitment to sit every day, they can see in greater detail the range of states they experience and make the choice to open around them on a daily basis. This is also true for students practicing as probationary formal students, formal students, and those who eventually take up monastic training.

All of the different categories of enrolment are structured as they are because they are about learning to choose opening over following habit and tendency. It is not until we are more able to distinguish between making a choice and following compulsion that we can really begin to integrate our practice with what we think of as the rest of our "lives". Until then, there is a tendency to think of one's practice as one thing and one's "life" as another.

Monastic training, like all of practice, is about learning that it is always possible to choose to open up around how self-image constrains experience. But there is a difference between training as a monastic and training as a lay student. The difference is in that monastic training requires that one makes the choice to open to Openness not just once a week or once a day, but continuously.

The Roshi says in "Life Beyond Boundary", an open letter on monastic training which was published in 1989:

The winds that howl over the earth move homeless through the sky. Having no place to dwell or settle, they are simply the sky moving within itself. Our life arises between earth and sky and moves without rest: breathing in, breathing out, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, being born, giving birth, dying. The life that lives each of us is the same life. It lives you. It lives as the colours and sounds and thoughts and feelings. It lives as a heartbeat and as a deathrattle. This life lives and dies as each of us but life itself doesn't die; it just lives. It lives as bodies and minds, trees and stones, planets and stars and space, it lives as earth and sky. The life that lives you, that beats your heart, that thinks your thoughts, that gave birth to you and will bury you is not your life. It is just life and you and I and all beings are simply life moving within itself.

When we pretend to ourselves that these are our lives we blind ourselves to the horizonless expanse in which we arising and moving. When we separate ourselves from this vastness we fall into loneliness, anger, fear, self-pity and the whole pattern of struggle and suffering that we play out to pretend to ourselves that we don't have to take responsibility for ourselves and live as this vastness. To avoid learning and manifesting the dignity of being truly human, we feel small and threatened by this vastness. We look at each other but see only ourselves, only see our own images and projections walling off this vastness into territories and strategies (although this is as senseless as trying to tie knots in the wind). We try to squat down and try to bury ourselves under the weight of our thoughts and commentaries and relationships and fears and cravings, hoping that this density will make self-image a fact instead of the trick of the light that it is. We try to make a home out of open space and dwell there and try to keep out anything that might call us to move out from under the weight of habit and tendency and conditioning.

Shukke tokudo means to commit oneself with body, breath, speech and mind to move out of our home territory into a life beyond boundary, without limits. It is stepping out from under the crushing weight of self-image and finding ourselves to be the vastness of life itself.

The homeless life is the term traditionally used to describe monastic training but, in truth, whether we are a monk or a householder we are all homeless. Life stretches out in all directions around us. The house that we live in can never be a home. Although we might live in this house, this house arises in the restless exertion of life itself which is showing itself to us as walls and windows and floors.

The difference between a householder and a monk is not that one can realize this vastness and the other can't. The crucial point, the testing edge, is that the monk has left him or herself no choice but to practice and recognize and unfold this vastness and has also committed herself to helping others to do the same, even if it is only through the inescapable fact of their commitment which shows itself in their every moment to themselves and others through their robes and kesa and walk and manner. While a layperson can be dedicated to their practice, to the teaching and the teacher, this dedication is weighed in shifting balance with the commitments and relationships involved with family and career. The commitment and relationships of the monk are to the Sangha of practitioners and all beings are their family.

A vow is continuous. Feelings and thoughts come and go, but regardless of how one is feeling the vow to obtain the Way and liberate all beings remains constant. This is Hotsu-bodaishin, the mind of Buddha, from which we vow to never turn. The life of a Zen monk is the embodying of the Four Great Vows:

All beings without number, I vow to liberate.

Endless obsessions, I vow to release.

Dharma gates beyond measure, I vow to penetrate.

Limitless Awakening, I vow to unfold.

Sometimes students wonder how we can vow to do such far-reaching and awesome things. But really, the question is first how can we become capable of actually vowing at all.

To become capable of making a vow we must first become capable of making a choice. When it comes time for you to sit at home or to come to the monastery, the fact that you often don't feel like making the effort does not mean that you can't make the effort. The resistance that comes up, the disinterest that comes up, the thoughts about other things you'd rather be doing - all of these are what you need to practice with. In each moment you can choose to open to reality. Choose with your fingers, your knees, your forehead, your elbows, the colours, sounds and everything that is arising as this moment. Choose reality with reality, the reality of your own experience as it actually is. Only the practice of mindfulness is actually a choice. Anything else is delusion and compulsion.

When you choose reality, it might surprise you. When you choose reality it is not what you expect

because it's not based on your expectations.

Have a good morning.

The Circle

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, November 23rd, 1997

I've spent a lot of time sitting here on this circular cushion called a zafu, watching my thoughts and feelings, watching myself circling without going anywhere - literally.

Zen Master Anzan Hoshin often says to us, "Sit up straight, pay attention". Now, we've heard this before. Our parents used to say, "Sit up straight, pay attention." And we say to our children, "Sit up straight, pay attention". Another saying that we have all heard is, "What goes around comes around."

Sitting on a zafu is an invitation to sit in open space, alert, attentive. We sit here, feeling the movement of the breath, feeling the body, opening the senses. Again and again we sit here just getting lost in thought, starting over again and again, coming back again and again to this breath, this moment. We seem to keep coming back to the beginning of a circle. But is that really what is taking place? Thoughts and feelings, irritation, bits and pieces of confusion, shards of memory, tactics, the hope that if we crank things up and practise hard..... the frustration of falling asleep.

We spend a lot of time joining the ends of fragmented thoughts and feelings into circles that we can be the centre of, spliced and sectioned understandings of how things are for us. We seem always to be starting, coming at things from a different point in the circle. When we begin our sitting, we may be very clear for a few moments about our intention to sit up straight and pay attention to what is actually going on. And then a thought comes up, a feeling comes up and away we go, circling around and around.

I found this news clip dated November 25, 1997. It's entitled "Sad Ending for the Little Plane That Could." It reads:

"Investigators haven't determined how a vintage plane took off by itself Sunday while its pilot was out cranking the propeller. It flew around Ohio for more than hour before running out of gas and

crashing in a field."

Sort of like the little plane that could, with no one behind the controls, we circle around, going nowhere until the state runs out.

But here the metaphor crashes, because there is no plane, no pilot, no circling around anything. As we sit here on these circles, in a room in which there is absolutely nothing going on, all of this apparent activity, the whirling and circling of thoughts and feelings, of memories, of associations, is nothing more than movement of our own attention. All of it is fabricated. All of it is illusion. There are no circles around us, just open space.

In this open space in which nothing that we think is going on is actually going on, a great deal is happening. Our life is happening. Rising and falling, coming and going, colours, forms, sounds, and thoughts and feelings too. But they are just coming and going.

The Sensei reminds us in *Wild Time* that when this moment comes it has not come from anywhere, when it goes it does not go anywhere. There is just vast activity without any one doing it.

If we didn't create a circle, there would be nothing we could be the centre of. If we did not believe that the feeling of self really was a self, then there would be no circle which contains experiencing by measuring everything relative to the limited perspective that comes about by narrowing Knowing into the sense of being a knower.

The Buddha Dharma, the Teachings of Awake Awareness, begins with paying attention. When we begin to pay attention we begin to notice how we pay attention, to how fickle, insincere, heavy handed, and exaggeratedly earnest we tend to be. Struggling against our sense of struggle causes us to chase ourselves in circles. Even when we are sitting still in zazen.

This is called "samsara": the circuit of conditioned experiencing.

When we sit up straight on these round cushions, however, we get another perspective. We can see that all around our conditioned responses and klutziness, the colours and forms and sounds and sensations are all doing just fine. We recognize that it is our attachment to the sense of self and a world of objects arranged around a self that is the cause of our irritation, our suffering.

This is called "dukkha."

When we sit up straight, we gain a vantage not usually available to us. Perhaps it is only a glimpse, a moment of insight which just vanishes. Then we find ourselves coming back again and again to doing the various things that cause us suffering. And being so convinced of these strategies that we don't even recognize suffering as suffering.

But if we come back again and again to sitting on the zafu then again and again these glimpses come up. As they come up again and again it becomes harder to take what Eihei Dogen zenji in the Genjokoan calls our "small circles of concern" so seriously.

We begin to be able to see from more than just one perspective. Sitting here on this circle, watching our circles, obsessing about them, watching them disintegrate, we begin to see clearly.

There is nothing solid, nothing substantial about them, because they are only the movement of our own attention. We begin to see through the walls of the circles, even as they form.

As we open to the arising of these moments of understanding more and more often we begin to understand what the Hua Yen tradition calls "round wisdom." Having a mind which does not measure experiences from the sense of self towards an object outside of it, but which embraces 360 degrees simultaneously.

When the sense of referencing everything from a sense of a self is just no longer something we can take seriously, then this is called "nirvana" which means "vanished" like a flame on a match or a candle that has been blown out.

Although it can seem as if Zen practice is a matter of getting lost in some contraction of attention, having it fall out from under us, and then starting all over again, this is not really a closed circle that just goes around and around and goes nowhere.

In The Straight Path, Anzan Hoshin roshi says,

The Straight Path is a circle in that, in order to get back to Awareness itself, in order to return to where we started from, we have to make our way through all of the things we have used to separate ourselves from Awareness itself, from experience itself. We have to sit and observe our habitual patterns, we have to look at our tawdry little stories right in the face and begin to realize just how meaningless they are.

So when I say that we have to go through all of the things that we have used to separate ourselves from Awareness, I do not mean that we have to pay for our sins. I do not mean that we have to suffer for having separated ourselves in such a way. The separation itself is already suffering (dukkha). Instead, we must simply sit with it, we must observe it openly.

Another way to talk about the Straight Path is to talk of it as a spiral. At any point within our practice, whether we are just beginning our practice or practice is mature and deep, we are working with the same thing (body, breath, speech and mind) but working with them from different angles.

Actually, of course, the Straight Path is not a circle, not a spiral, it is not a square, is not a line. It is a point! But it is a pointless point. It is a dimensionless point. It is the Zero Point of this moment in which everything is coming and going simultaneously.

And now it's time to sit up straight on these round zafu and pay attention.

Have a good morning.

Context and Content: Beyond the Circles of Self Concern

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, August 25th, 2012

When I was appointed to the training post of Tenzo, or head cook at our previous monastery Zazen-ji many years ago, I was still a novice monk. I was very grateful to be given the opportunity to support the practice of the Sangha by preparing meals for practitioners and deepen my own practice at the same time. I understood some of the context of the training post, but I had concerns about it as well, which I raised with the Roshi. I dove down into some content and fished up up what I thought were treasures: memories of my previous experience of working as a chef in a vegetarian restaurant for a time, of cooking for large groups of people in other organizations I'd been a member of, of cooking for family, of being the 'woman in the kitchen' - all of this came up. During my youth, women still often as not, ended up cooking and doing the laundry. And actually that has not changed that much in the culture since then. So I brought my concerns to the Roshi and he listened patiently as I described what was worrying me. All of this really boiled down to, "But I want to practice and Wake Up. I don't want to spend all of my time being 'the woman in the kitchen'. Is that how it's going to be?"

The Roshi laughed and said, "You might be chopping onions, but you won't be 'in the kitchen.'"

Some 21 years later, and you will sometimes see me standing in the kitchen chopping onions. But that's just just a partial view of what is going on. What is really going on is that I am standing in the kitchen, in the midst of the Total Field of All Possibilities, chopping an onion. And when I look over, the Roshi is often standing there also, chopping an onion. In fact, last evening he was chopping an onion as he made the wild mushroom soup you will be having at supper.

I tell you this story to illustrate the difference between content and context. The content was my storylines, my fear, my images of myself and how other people might view me. In short, my circles of self-concern. The context was, and is, this shōjo-no-shū, this practice of realization, the continuous questioning into and opening to the space in which everything is taking place.

When students hear the phrase "open to context" they will often think of that as being a thing, rather like a place or a state of mind that is very defined. But the context we are referring to is not defined by any one thing. It is not a place or a certain kind of space and it is not a state of mind. It is not something that can be imagined or thought of or about. It is a coming and going of infinite ever-changing details, open to the ten directions. It has no edges or boundaries because it is your entire experience and of the Nature of Experiencing as Such. And even these are just the contents arising within various contexts which are all just contents within the ultimate context of Experiencing in itself. Even Suchness is just the radiance, the shining, of the luminosity of Awareness in itself.

And here I will just take a moment to remind you that when you hear phrases like "the luminosity of Awareness in itself", this is not another way of describing some manner of "god". If that occurred to you, please recognize that that is just more of your own content that you're adding to what is being said and open attention past it so that you can actually hear what I am saying. I am talking about the actuality of every experience, not something guiding experiences like some kind of Super Self. The idea of a deity or a higher reality is just another symptom of the fragmentation of experience that comes about by the contraction and fragmentation of attention. The Buddha Dharma is a cure for the illness, not another way of justifying the symptoms.

One symptom is a tendency to think of the practice of mindfulness and insight as something other than, or separate from, one's life. In your life there can seem to be so many contexts, so many changing priorities. What is important seems to change all of the time and who you are, your sense of yourself as a self at any given moment, changes along with what's important to you. Experiencing thus seems to be divided up into a collection of selves and their interactions: the work self, the family self, the me-and-my-friends self, the Zen student self and so on and so forth. All of these selves can seem to have different agendas that apparently have little to do with each other. But that is only a trick of the light, a slight of hand. What it is that is making it appear that way is self-image. And I'll take a moment here to remind you that self-image is not some sort of entity, like your evil twin. It is a process of contraction.

When you release contraction, you are opening to context. To open to context, you need to release contraction. It's actually very simple. Wherever you are, whatever you are doing at any moment, you can choose to open to openness. If you are not making that choice, you are not choosing. You are following the momentum of habitual habits and tendencies.

Wherever you are, whatever you are doing at any given moment, the bodymind is present. And the bodymind is present within a wider context - the space of the room you are in, or the street you

are walking down -- all around you there is open space, not a 'mystical' or 'spiritual' space, but space that can be seen and felt bodily. If you are not feeling the body, or opening to seeing and hearing, what are you doing? Most of the time what you'll find is that you're following all of the thoughts and feelings that are associated with your circles of self-concern.

As Eihei Dogen zenji says in "The Question of Our Lives" or the Genjokoan as translated by Joshu Dainen roshi and Anzan Hoshin roshi:

"Sailing on the ocean with no land in sight, looking in the four directions, all you can see is the round ocean. Actually, the ocean isn't round or square, it has myriad qualities like a palace, like an ornament. It only seems round as far as we can see at that brief time. View the ten thousand dharmas in this way.

Life itself is enlightenment itself and has many aspects but you can only see what your present understanding of practice allows. To appreciate the ten thousand dharmas, understand that oceans and mountains may seem round or square but there are details to still be seen and that there are whole world-systems in all directions.

Your immediate circles of concern are of no account. What is demonstrated itself right here beneath your feet and in a single drop of water."

When you are sitting zazen, this is not the time to ponder the foibles of what you think of as 'your life'. It's not the time to assess or compare yourself, to make plans, to think about situations you sometimes find yourself, to resolve an argument, to come to a decision or even to think about your practice of Zen. It's time that should be spent opening to context, not content. Not 'your' context, THE context. And that begins with practising the posture, feeling into the sensations of the bodymind, and opening to the sense fields as much as possible, as continuously as possible, throughout your sitting round. It's only half an hour, so really make use of the time.

If thoughts about content come up, don't finish the sentence. If feelings come up, instead of directing attention towards them, feel into the sensations of the bodymind sitting. Use the forms and practise them as fully as you can because they provide a context or environment of mindfulness for us. Or at least, they can if you practise them fully, instead of just as something you have to do when you're at the monastery. We have our body and breath to help us, and to show us how the mind is.

Open past the thought by releasing it. You do not have to complete the sentence. You do not have to erase what you have thought. You don't have to try to stop thinking. Just let go and open up. And then open further to and with this breath, this moment, this body and mind.

You're not going to learn anything new by regurgitating storylines, by shuffling your thoughts and

feelings hoping to find the queen of hearts or the ace of spades, the one card in the deck that will win the game -- whatever it is you think the game is. You're just cheating yourself out of the time you have to practice and Wake Up. The ability to know and to understand the presentation of Knowing that arises as experiences cannot be opened through thoughts and feelings. It is the teaching that is always present within every sound, every sight, every sensation.

You try to figure out the past, but you are only right here, right now, thinking about the past. You try to figure out the future, but you are only right here, right now, thinking about the future. Your thoughts seem to create a sense of movement, of something happening, but you haven't gone anywhere at all and there is nothing happening. You get "lost in thought", but you're not lost. You're sitting right here. See the wall? feel your hands in the mudra? Release attention into the colours and forms and sounds and sensations. &nbsp;Who and what you are is beyond confusion, clarity, delusion and enlightenment. Who you are is utterly ungraspable and to realize it all that you have to do is to release everything that you believe to be true, all of your understandings as well as your misunderstandings.

All content and all contexts arise within the context of Awareness in Itself. As the Roshi has often said: "If it's closed, open around it." Which means to use every moment of recognizing contractions of attention to open to a wider context. But even that wider context is arising within a wider context and so he says, "If it is open, open further."

The Contraptions of Contraction  
by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
Dainen-ji, June 13th, 2009

Ka-chunk.

One word and the gears have already begun to turn. "What does that mean, 'ka-chunk'? What is she talking about?"

Well, that's what I'm talking about.

One spark and the engine of the five skandhas is set in motion. Form -- what is that? A some thing. A gear turns and engages a sprocket - basic reactivity. 'Is that sound threatening? Can I get something from it? Can I just ignore it?' A flywheel begins to spin - symbolization. "What kind of

file match do I have for that?" Habitual patterning "Well, it's like the sound of an engine, sort of. Consciousness - "Oh, it's Sensei talking about machinery or something."

When the contraption of contraction starts up, you could just let it run out of momentum, slow and stop, but once it's set in motion, the tendency is to become engaged in how all of its moving parts seem to fit together. It is that sense of movement and it's solidity, that generates locatedness and locatedness generates more and more complexity. Greased by the three klesas of passion, aggression and stupidity, self-image crunches the open field of present experience into gears and the noise and movement of the gears creates a stronger and stronger sense of a "self" and "other", "this" and "that". This storyline about "that" person and what "I" said or did, or what they said or did and how that led to this thing or that thing - the current confusions, petty gripes, strategies and storylines, all gears and cogs and sprockets turning with one another. And at the centre of it, some "one" who believes itself to be the engine, hiding amongst the cogs, wheels, gears and wires.

[sound of gears turning, made with a ratchet]

In the teisho, "Do Not Sway" in the series "Doing Not-Doing Part Three: commentaries on the Forty-eight Supporting Precepts", Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi said this to the monks in the room:

In each moment you can rest alert in balance point and in the exertion of the pivot point of this moment of colours and forms and sounds and sensations and not be swayed. You know that your stories are just stories. You know that the gestures of attention towards this or away from that are the same old mechanisms that you have seen break down over and over again. Now, monks, some of the gears still spin and chatter, a piston spasms, and sparks still fly and smoke still drifts up from here and there. But the contraption that you used to ride around in is broken now. You have ridden in it all of your life and rode it onto a zafu one day. And while we warned you that a zafu is corrosive to the mechanisms and machinations of self-image you kept sitting on one. Remember what a fine machine it was only five years ago, ten years ago, twenty years ago? How seriously you took it, how you polished it with such care and pride and self-loathing and fear and lust and pettiness and all of the other things it could become as contraction was propagated by your polishing? Remember how fast it could go, how far it would take you into states that you can no longer get even more than a wheezy puff out of now? Well, now look at it. Just look at it. What a piece of broken down junk. So now you might still sit in the ruined remnants of contraction. But sooner or later you will just give up on it and come out into the open field that the old contraption was always sitting in.

When sitting zazen or when not sitting, you see yourself fall again and again into the gears of old patterns of contraction. The wheels and cogs begin to turn, over even the smallest of "issues" and the "components" that make up those "issues" and connect to other larger and smaller "issues" - many gears with compatible teeth-like protrusions that bite into, grip and turn each other. The hum

of the engine grows so loud that you think it is your name, that it is who you are. And even when it begins to wind down, you keep going back to it, cranking it up, feeding yourself into it.

[sound of gears turning, made with a ratchet]

Instead of understanding that what is going on is a process and a series of mechanisms, and letting them spin and clatter without becoming them, you become them. When someone else is caught in the wheels and cogs of contraction, instead of just staying sane, staying with what you are doing, you begin to contract and crunch the field into gears and their contraptions of contraction and yours become intertwined and tangled and you spin each other around.

Sometimes when sitting, but not really sitting, it can seem as though you can contract and not yourself become the contraction. Like you can drive the steam engine, but somehow not actually be in it. You may "sort of know" that it's not a good idea to propagate a state, but you start doing it anyway, thinking that you can keep it 'contained'. This stuff is quite tricky because the feeling of justification, of being "right" becomes so focused you can trick yourself into thinking that you stand apart from the grinding of the gears. Sometime there are many, many gears, intricately fitted together, all spinning tightly and your perspective becomes so narrowed and so focused that you feel very cool, cool to the point of cold. Steely. You think you have the state under control, but it's really like a pressure cooker with the lid buckling, about to blow and all you are noticing is the thin stream of steam shooting out of the top of it. At other times, the gears wobble wildly, rub against each other and generate so much heat it cooks your brain. You can't think straight, don't know what to do and become confused and incapable. And all of this grinding and spinning is taking place seemingly "within" you, or within the space of the bodymind.

Where is this "space" and what is it? Is there a compartment inside of you that you are in, and in which all of these mechanical bits are moving? This "place" inside of the bodymind where you seem to withdraw to, where you turn the hand wheel to crank up and ponder meanings and interpretations and try to figure out what is "right" or "real" is a fabricated construct. You become fabricated because self-image is itself a fabrication that manufactures itself moment by moment. It is only possible for this to happen if you invert and internalize attention. It can seem to have its own reality to you because it can compress and fold, bend and twist and distort knowing into numberless cogs and gears. But in all of this distortion there is also the illusion that you are "containing" it. Yet all you've done is to create a fabricated separation between body and mind and reality and it is that feeling of separation that allows you to feel that all of this stuff is going on "inside" of you, separate from what is "outside" of you. You have turned yourself into a "container" of madness, and all of this is madness. You become madness.

Kachunk.

When you see the first motions of the engine, when the first gear is engaged and the rotor begins to turn, if you practise, attention can be strong enough to notice them, but not fall into them, not

become them.

As the Roshi said in the quote I just read, "So now you might still sit in the ruined remnants of contraction. But sooner or later you will just give up on it and come out into the open field that the old contraption was always sitting in."

One way or the other, contraction always falls apart. Even if you do nothing, it will compress and compress and ultimately will decay simply because it is impermanent. You don't have to wait for the contraption to run out of gas and exhaust itself for that to happen. If you understand anything about practising, you will not wait. You can always choose to "makusa", as Dogen zenji and the Roshi say. This means to "do not-doing" or allow yourself to be natural and unfabricated by opening all around the whirring of the gears and staying with the spaciousness and vividness of experiencing as a whole. Release the narrowing of attention by coming back to the breath as a place of which you can release it, by opening to the colours and forms and sounds. You can just stop. If you are in the middle of a sentence and recognize that you are being an asshole, you can say "I'll just stop now." You don't have to cling to the engine while it runs on and on by itself like a runaway lawnmower hacking its way through the field of open knowing. Just let go. Fall open to the open expanse of this moment.

I'll tell you something about the Roshi that was very striking for me when I first began practising -- he doesn't contract. I mean, he really doesn't contract. He doesn't do what most people do. He doesn't keep a collection of old memories about bad stuff. He doesn't hold on to the memories of things that people have done to later use as ammunition. He doesn't save crazy emails or letters or photographs so he can look through them and remember just how crazy people can be. He isn't at all interested in the petty nonsense most human beings find entertaining. The way that he is when presenting teisho is how he is all of the time. Sometimes he might have a thoughtful expression on his face but unlike most people who are deeply into some storyline about something when they look thoughtful, the Roshi will usually say something like "You know, we could make noodles out of daikon and braise them in gojuchang." Or "The graphic-user interface is being run in virtual terminal 7 out of 63 possible terminals. So it's not so much that you are dropping out of or under the GUI as using the space around it in the command line."

A process can be fluid and living or it can be heavy, cumbersome and inflexible. If what you are noticing is heavy, cumbersome and inflexible, that is telling you something very clearly. It is telling you that you should drop it immediately because regardless of what might seem to be going on, you have abandoned intelligence for the apparent cleverness of how everything has become fitted by excluding everything else. Let the five skandhas just fall open instead of piling up and they become the five wisdoms.

What are the five wisdoms? Well, you know, the details of that don't matter right now. What matters is the great matter of birth and death, of how you live your life. You can wonder about wisdom all that you want but it will not fit inside that contraption. So wise up by opening out, right

now. Instead of riding back and forth in imaginary time and space, in memories and rants and expectations Just sit here, right now.

[Sound of gears rapidly turning, slows and with one final click, stops]

Crunch

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, June 14, 2008

Crunch

[pause]

Crunch

[Pause]

Cunch, crunch, crunch

When you are sitting, gazing at the wall, if you are practising at all and if you are honest with yourself, you can see attention narrowing and the shadows of storylines forming. They begin to come up as a fragment of a thought about perhaps something that happened yesterday or something that you might do later today or something you are concerned about.

Crunch

Although you know you should practise, you feel compelled to look more closely at this storyline that is forming.

Crunch, crunch

What will you do about this? You could stay with the breath, the sensations of the body, the spaciousness of seeing and hearing. But...

Crunch, crunch, crunch

Now you are chewing on the storyline like it's a bone and it seems to you that you are getting something out of it so you keep chewing on it. But what are you getting out of it?

Sometimes a dog will find a bone and will chew on it until it shatters. Crunch, crunch, crunch. The shards of bone cut the soft tissues of the mouth until they bleed. Mmmm. Tastes good. Tastes like meat.

How is this different from what you do? Well, there is no blood, but you are chewing on yourself. The stuff the storylines are made up of, the images, the feelings, the internalized sounds - what are they? They are the folding and congealing of attention into the distorted shapes and shadows of the strange and sometime torturous landscapes that you conjure up in the "privacy of your own thoughts". All of this is the result of crunching attention, but you're not noticing the crunching because you are obsessed with the "flavour" of the storyline.

Anzan Hoshin roshi's translation of Eihei Dogen zenji's text the "Fukanzazengi" includes a paragraph which explains:

You've got what you need, the treasure of this body and birth, so don't waste your time. Keep to this as the basis of the Way of Awake Awareness. Don't be attracted by just a spark from the flint. Anyway, your body is like dew on the grass, your life a flash of lightning; vain for a moment and then vanished in an instant.

This treasure of body and birth is the energy of bodymind. I don't mean some "mystical" energy. I mean the vivid fact of being alive, as the whole bodymind, meat, bone, marrow, eyes, ears, nose, the capacity to think and feel, all of these are energies of bodymind. You can make choices concerning how you will use these energies.

The capacity to think and feel can be open or closed. When closed there is a sense of fundamental problem and a great deal of the energy of thought and feeling is spent in the attempt to control one's world, to control experience, to fill the sense of poverty. This sense of problem is fundamental, wordless, and so we try to put words to it, give it a reason for being there. But the only reason that it is there is that attention is contracted. Moment after moment we have the opportunity to open to reality, but because our expectations seldom match our experiencing as it actually is, our expectations put us at odds with ourselves and the world around us. And that is the whole point of expectations. Self-image, which is itself a process of contraction has learned that giving rise to expectation inevitably leads to failed expectation and so provides an ongoing sense of problem to chew on.

But our lives do not take place in the language, imagery and feeling tones of expectation. Our lives take place amidst colours and forms and sounds and sensations. Our practice of mindfulness is about opening the capacities of bodymind to feel, to see, to hear and taste and think clearly, openly, instead of crunching attention.

Through practising the posture of zazen, you can begin to recognize the states that come up for

you that cause you to move away from the posture. The details of the posture are very specific: sitting still in a balanced and aligned posture; the position of the hands in the mudra, opening the eye gaze, keeping the tip of the tongue against the hard palate, teeth lightly touching. All of these are "points of mindfulness" and if you are practising them and really paying attention to them, you will notice if they begin to change and this gives you an opportunity to practise with the states that give rise to these changes long before you would ordinarily notice them. This also becomes true at other times, when you are not sitting zazen. You can recognize the same bodily effects of crunching, such as the furrow between your brows, hunching the shoulders, clenching the hands or teeth, becoming a black hole in space through focusing on one thing instead of opening to experience as a whole.

There have always been gaps between our storylines...which is good because if all that we ever do is to go from one claustrophobic storyline into another and another and another and another, we become completely dysfunctional. These shifts in attention that allow us to open to at least some of the details of present experiencing, at least some of the time, are how we are able to recognize what is going on and get some necessary tasks done. But you could practise the shift all of the time, instead of waiting for it to randomly happen.

Uncrunching attention is not difficult. Today, while you are sitting, as soon as you notice that what you are seeing is not the wall, but the imagery of your internalized ghost-world, sit up straight, practise the details of the posture and open to peripheral vision. As soon as you notice that what you are listening to is not the sounds in the room or outside of the room, but the drone of your own commentary as words and phrases, don't even bother completing the sentence. Instead, sit up straight, feel the breath, open attention to the sensations of the whole bodymind sitting and open to what you are actually hearing with your ears. As soon as you notice that your attention is becoming fixated on feeling tones, use the noticing of that as a reminder to feel the breath, the tanden, the sensations of the whole bodymind sitting. Open attention to bodily sensation instead of being sucked into a vortex of feeling tones. Lift yourself out from underneath the weight of sadness or confusion or self-involved storylines by releasing attention into the colours and forms and sounds and sensations. You already know what all of those storylines are about because they are your storylines. You created them and you keep them going and deepen them by propagating them. Of course they can seem to make sense to you when they are going on, but that is only because contraction always makes sense to contraction -- because it's contracted. The content of the storyline isn't the point. The content is a smokescreen. The point is contracting into a "self" peering out at others or at situations or at the world from the vantage point of "self" and "other". Don't crunch. Don't do this to yourself and to those around you.

Today, when walking through the hallways of the monastery, don't crunch attention. Straighten up and pay attention to the details of experiencing. Open to sensations and seeing and hearing so that you can experience walking with the whole bodymind. Make use of the forms and practise them as completely as you are able. The forms are a constant reminder to stop rushing past what is being experienced. If you allow a state or a storyline to gloss over the details of the forms, then

you are allowing that state or storyline to be more important than your practice. And if you do that, then you are stuck with the state.

If you are sweeping a floor, feel the breath and body, feel not just the broom but the hands that are holding the broom. Open to seeing and hearing. Release the crunching of attention by paying attention to what you are actually doing. Open past the storylines, the "personal" associations, the reluctance and recoil and sense of grudge that self-image is so quick to generate.

If you are sitting outside on one of the monastery porches drinking a cup of coffee during a free period, don't crunch while you drink. Instead, sit up straight, open to peripheral vision and allow the bodymind to open to and enjoy the vividness of seeing and hearing and sensation.

In the teisho "Completely It", in the series "Five Fingers, Ten Directions: Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's text "Jippo" the Roshi says:

The tenzo presented a wonderful oryoki meal of herbaceous pasta salad with a variety of tomatoes and beans and Italian parsley; a salad of fennel, escarole, celery, and olives; beautifully crisp red radishes drizzled with extra virgin olive oil, kosher salt and fresh cracked black pepper. But it was not made for "you" to eat it. The flavour of a meal, its texture on the tongue, is poisoned if there is someone there eating it. If there is "someone" squatting there behind the eyes eating the meal, although the meal has been swallowed it has not really been tasted, and so has not really been eaten. But there is no self behind the eyes. When it appears to be present it makes everything that is truly present into an absence. Most of the colours and forms fade and others grow lurid, most of the sounds dim and others blare. And so the meal that is served in oryoki is not for you to eat. It is for the bowl and spoon and hand and mouth and the ten directions of this whole world. If you bring in a "someone", an agent of these boundless activities, even Dogen cannot pretend that you do not deserve thirty blows.

Let's just let this "someone", this "self-image" go. There is nothing here for it anyway. It really only enjoys itself when it can complain or feel threatened or stupid or worried. There is really no problem here in this wondrous world of ten directions and so there is nothing for it. Just let the tongue and teeth enjoy the radish. That's what the meal was prepared for. Let seeing enjoy the colours and forms. Let hearing present itself joyfully as sounds. Let zazen enjoy zazen.

The office of the Tenzo has carefully prepared two meals to provide nourishment to those attending the Dharma Assembly today so that they can continue to practice. But any food that we eat, whenever it is prepared, provides us with the most precious resource of energy. Please don't waste that energy by crunching and folding down. As our Meal Chant, the Gokan-no-ge or the Five Rememberances says:

This meal arises from the labour of all beings,

may we remember their offering.  
Delusions are many, attention wanders,  
may we justify this offering.  
Greed arises from self-cherishing,  
may we be free in moderation.  
This offering sustains us, gives us strength,  
may we be grateful.  
We use this strength and attain the Way.  
Prajnaparamita!

We justify this offering by just responding to this moment as it actually is. Instead of crunching down on that bone of lifeless contraction, use the energy you are given to open whole-bodily to the vividness of experiencing. The generosity of life offers us life as colours, forms, sounds and sensations and all that we need do is make ourselves available to it with our skin, meat bone, and marrow, with the whole bodymind as a whole.

So please, don't crunch yourself up, unfold yourself.

## Daily Schedules

[View the practice calendar...](#)

Honzan Dainen-ji / Zen Centre of Ottawa  
Wolfville Zazenkai  
Harrow Zazenkai

Honzan Dainen-ji / Zen Centre of Ottawa  
&nbsp;&nbsp; 

Morning Formal Sitzings for WWZC Students:

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday Mornings The formal sittings begin at 6:00 a.m. You would need to arrive by 5:45 in time for First Bell. The sitting ends at 7:25 with the

Chants. Following that there is a Daruma-kata Aiki review which ends at about 7:50. If you need to leave before the kata, please let us know that in advance by sending an email to [schedule@wwzc.org](mailto:schedule@wwzc.org).

#### Saturday Morning General Sitting for WWZC Students:

The general sitting begins at 9:30 a.m. You would need to arrive by 9:15 a.m., in time for First Bell. The sitting ends at 11:45 a.m. Some general students attend the 6:00 a.m. Saturday morning formal sitting, stay for breakfast and then attend the general sitting. If you stay for breakfast you will need to make a \$5.00 dana contribution for the meal. Proceeds from meals go to White Wind Zen Community.

#### Monday and Thursday Evening for WWZC Students:

The associate sitting begins at 7:30 p.m. You would need to arrive by 7:15 p.m., in time for First Bell. The sitting ends at 9:10 p.m.

#### Friday (Hosan)

There are no formal sittings scheduled at the monastery on Fridays, but you are expected to sit at home if you have committed to sitting zazen daily.

#### Sunday Formal Sitting for WWZC Students:

The Sunday morning formal sittings are reserved to monastics, formal students, and probationary formal students.

#### Wolfville Zazenkai

Monday to Friday

6:30 - 7:45am

Bowing, chanting, zazen, kinhin, recorded teisho and Daruma-kata aiki.

Tuesday

8:15 - 10:15pm

Thursday

7:00 - 9:30pm

Sunday

8:30 - 10:00am

&nbsp;

Harrow Zazenkai

Monday

9:00 - 10:00am

6:30 - 7:15pm

Formal sitting: chanting, zazen, recorded teisho.

Zazen, chanting.

Tuesday

9:00 - 10:00am

7:15 - 8:45pm

Zazen, chanting, Daruma-kata aiki.

General sitting: zazen, recorded Dharma talks

Wednesday

9:00 - 10:00am

6:30 - 7:15pm

Formal Sitting: chanting, zazen, recorded teisho, Daruma-kata aiki.

Zazen, chanting.

Thursday

9:00 - 10:00am

6:30 - 7:15pm

Formal Sitting: chanting, zazen, Daruma-kata aiki.

Zazen, chanting.

Friday

9:00 - 9:45am

6:30 - 7:15pm

Formal sitting: Chanting, Zazen, chanting.

Formal Sitting: chanting, zazen, recorded teisho, Daruma-kata aiki.

Saturday

9:00 - 9:45am

6:30 - 7:15pm

Zazen, chanting.

Zazen, chanting.

Sunday

9:00 - 10:00am

6:30 - 7:15pm

Formal sitting: Chanting, Zazen, chanting.

Zazen, chanting.

Dana Paramita

by Ven. Shikai Zuiko O-sensei

Dainen-ji

We see or hear the word "dana" and alms or money might pop into mind. This is our usual frame of reference. We see the word as the "suggested" dana for a workshop or for this occasion as being so many dollars. Let's pick up this word and turn it this way and that. Let us look beyond the obvious and accepted. As we look at other aspects of this word, originally Pali and then Sanskrit, we see a concept people have been discussing for at least 2600 years. We see that it speaks of the voluntary giving of material, energy, and wisdom. In the "Paramita" series from a 1994 O-sesshin, Anzan Hoshin roshi says that dana is "a recognition of the fundamental richness of experiencing."

The only self-describing species, we are human centric beings. We erroneously limit the idea of "voluntary giving" along with many other activities and qualities, as something only possible for humans. When that narrow, exclusive meaning is opened to include the world that arises as us and as all beings we are able to apply this understanding to our moment-to-moment experience.

When experience is viewed openly inevitably more and more angles and perspectives are exposed and the reality of a sharper, deeper, richer experience is known. We see, hear, taste, touch, feel, smell, and think, with more depth. The basic richness and luminosity of reality is revealed.

Investigation through practice continues to uncover meanings far more interesting in their inclusiveness than the handing over of money. Dana means generosity and richness. We understand this more and more completely as we practise the Dharma, the Teachings of Reality. The richness of the experiencing of the bodymind is vast and generous. Why would we choose to fixate on only one aspect of our experiencing? Usually this one aspect is, paradoxically, of poverty or lack or suffering. The only possible reason is ignorance.

We don't know we have a choice. We fixate on only certain aspects of experiencing and ignore the rest. We literally rob ourselves of our own lives by ignoring our actual experiencing. As we learn to notice the richness which presents itself in, around, and as us we find ourselves more capable, more able to live as the Treasure House of which Dogen zenji spoke in the "Fukanzazengi". It is then that we start to glimpse our indebtedness to the Lineage of Teachers who have been the vehicles for this priceless teaching for 2600 years. It is then that some of us decide to dedicate our marrow and bones and everything else to the preservation and continuation of this Dharma treasure.

The earth, our planet, our precious blue pearl, our home, is a sometimes decadently generous place. Humans do nothing and yet buds and leaves and flowers burst forth in cycles appropriate to their growth. In northern climes tiny flowers will bloom and carpet the tundra when the warmth of

the sun increases intensity with the revolutions of the planet. At the equator lush tropical growth relentlessly reclaims land that has been stripped, burned, and leached by human misjudgement and misuse.

Huge pieces of equipment provided by ill-informed aid agencies are abandoned for reasons ranging from no hard currency with which to buy gas to civil war. Overnight, creepers and vines start to grow around these artefacts of the machinery of greed. Over time this evidence of not caring, not paying attention, will be reduced to rust and dust and reintegrated into the soil. As a species bound by the contractions and playing out the views of self-image we live with stark evidence of the imbalance in our economics, our ecology, our basic housekeeping. For example, estimates are that 8 billion dollars would provide a basic education for peoples of the planet. We can't or aren't willing to do this and yet we find 12 billion dollars for perfume, 400 billion for illegal drugs and 700 billion for arms. These figures are by no means accurate. How could they be? But they are indicative of incredible imbalance.

The basic generosity of life is presented moment-after-moment in our own experiencing. All we need do is look. Each moment of experiencing presents seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, thinking, and feeling. All "we" ever have to do is notice. The bodymind adapts to the tiniest changes in environment, regulating temperature, renewing cells, and putting in place emergency programs and procedures to deal with too much, too little, or bad food, not enough, too much, or bad water. Bacteria and virus and parasites occupy and colonize the bodymind and it adapts. The skin is cut, a bone is broken, a baby is conceived, and the bodymind adapts. The generosity of the bodymind is so vast that when someone stops smoking after even forty or fifty years the cells that make up the bodymind start to cleanse and repair. The moments of life tick by unfolding the fabric of old age, sickness, and, inevitably, death. Even then the generosity of the bodymind would continue to present itself as food for beings if the process is not stopped by human intervention.

Film and video, radio, television, cameras, audio recorders, and print media have penetrated areas of life and behaviours of which our ancestors could never have even dreamed. Daily, the generosity of beings is broadcast and printed. An African lioness adopted three baby antelope, one died, one was eaten by another member of the pride, but she is still caring for one of the orphans. A dog in Belgium nursed three baby tigers after their mother died. A captive gorilla, Koko, adopted and even invented a name for a kitten. She called it "All ball". A troop of Vervet monkeys in Namibia looked after a young human for several years showing him where to find food and how to be a monkey. He is learning now to "be" a human through the generosity of other humans and the adaptability of the bodymind.

In spite of a day-to-day diet of stories showing greed, violence, and general bad behaviour generosity is still being manifested by human beings. Over a decade ago in Liberia, West Africa, during a civil war, a newly postpartum mother, Hilda, travelled 125 miles on foot carrying her infant to a village in the interior. This village was the home of her girlfriend who had gone to America, and as was the custom, had left her newborn at home with her parents. Hilda walked back to the

capital on the coast, still carrying her own infant, and alternately carrying and leading her friend's child. Both women are now in the United States. The toddler is a teenager. In another instance in West Africa, a man carried a letter over 200 miles to the town where my friend, a refugee from that same civil war, had travelled. Why did he do it for someone he didn't even know very well? He knew a letter from Canada must be important during that time of strife.

Self-image is pervasive in every area of human experience. We have come to accept its creations and concepts such as the nation state, governments, economies, religions, and social roles as inevitable, natural, and "right". We don't even think of them as inventions or fabrications. The strands that have been woven out of unexamined assumptions and beliefs wrap each and every one of us in a cocoon of misunderstanding. The strands are choking us. When and if we are fortunate enough to find this practice of Zen we are given the priceless opportunity to look into and open these traps.

The elegant and radical opportunity to know your own experience rather than to "know yourself" is unique to this practice. Every aspect of practice reveals the richness and inherent generosity of our experience. The experienced reality of the prose of practice, such as Wrong action does not arise. There is only the arising of benefit. There is only the benefit of all beings continuously unfolds our understanding. True, realized, and lived generosity is the basis of practice. Our usualness is so entangling that we can get lost over and over again. The quicksand of misunderstanding and the misguided efforts we make of trying to figure it out or of trying to make meaning out of events, pulls us under time and time again. Each time we notice anything at all about how we are and make the choice to practise the richness and generosity of this moment we are making a choice for freedom and the liberation all beings.

Be generous. Accept the generosity that is the life that is lived as you. Take responsibility for this generosity. The most generous act, the act of a Bodhisattva, one who is opening to openness, is the commitment to practise and teach beyond convenience. When monastic vows are taken the person is dedicating the life that lives as them to the liberation of all beings. In 2002 two monks, one originally from India, and one who emigrated from Britain specifically to study and practise at Dainen-ji, committed further to the liberation of all beings.

One such dedication was celebrated on the last evening of the May 2002 O-sesshin when Ven. Chunen Rampal received full ordination as a monastic from Zen Master Anzan Hoshin roshi. A visible and on-going sign to all of a fully ordained monk is the rakusu. This cloth "bib" worn around the neck by all monastics is a constant reminder of the history of the 2600 years of practice. It is encoded with information. Chunen shuso now wears a rakusu that has a bone ring as part of the straps. He polished the bone himself just as his practice has been polished for the past five years. The bone ring replaces the silver "knot of practice" pin of a novice. His first Dharma talk was given in front of the Roshi and the Sangha after he had offered incense to the Lineage as the new shuso.

## Dealing With the Demon

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, July 28, 2007

I'd like to begin with a folktale that Anzan Hoshin roshi sometimes tells:

Once upon a time a man went to the market place. There were many stalls displaying goods such as baskets, tea bowls, sandals, and so on but the man thought he saw something very strange. One merchant seemed to have an oni, a demon, sitting on his table. The man hurried over to take a closer look and saw that it was actually a demon.

The man asked the merchant, "What the...?"

The merchant said, "Oh, yes. It really is a demon, sir. Observe the horns, the fangs, the knotted muscles and grimacing face. He's very very strong and can cause a great deal of, er, mischief. However, his great energy can be put into constructive rather than destructive purposes, sir. All that one need do is to give him a schedule. Tell him when to go to sleep, when to get up, when to wash and have breakfast, when to work and what tasks to do and how long they should take, when to rest and so on. It's quite simple, really. You just have to make sure that you do this every day because situations always change."

The man asked, "And you're selling this demon."

The merchant said, "Ah, yes, sir. That is indeed the purpose of my setting up this humble shop after all, isn't it?"

So after some haggling the man purchased the demon from the merchant and led him to his home. At first his wife and children were appalled and frightened but they all soon became rather fond of the demon despite his hideous appearance and having him bathe a few times a day and rub sandalwood powder on his various armpits took care of the stench more or less. The demon took over all of the housework and so the man's wife was pleased. Soon, the demon was not only doing the gardening, but tutoring the children and the children loved him. In a few days the demon was running the man's weaving business. The family now all had time to play together and enjoy the day and go for picnics and whatnot.

The man began to have time to write poetry and spend time with friends playing Go and drinking sake. Unfortunately, most of his friends had to work so he had to mainly see them at night. One

evening he went to an inn with his friends and had quite a nice meal and settled in for a night of Go and pleasant conversation. The moon was particularly beautiful that night and he and his friends wrote renka, a series of linked verses, about it. Flask after flask of sake came and went and the night began to lighten into dawn and the man began to think of a verse when a sudden realization struck him. "Oh, lads, you know I've completely forgotten about my old demon and setting him up for the day. What mischief the silly old thing might get into without its schedule."

So he pushed off from the table and began to make his way through the streets. The early morning air was sweet, but just a bit too sweet. Actually, it was sickly sweet. Over the roof tops he saw a great plume of smoke. The man broke into a run. As he came around a corner his house came into view. Or what was left of it. There was a bit of one wall left standing amidst the flames and ruins and atop the wall was perched the demon, grilling the man's wife and children on spits.

The moral of the story: Doing what needs to be done when it needs to be done is important.

The story features a demon, and at first we might assume that the devil symbolizes self-image. After all, self-image is the source of all the ways we become confused and create suffering for ourselves and others. But the demon does not represent self-image because self-image is not a "thing" or some kind of entity. While the effects of self-image can be demonic, the other characters in the story as just as much a portrayal of self-image as the demon - the man who bought the demon, the merchant who sold it to him and so on are all self-image.

No, it's a story about energy - how we use our energy. The whole bodymind is energy but there are limits to the amount of energy we have. And so we need to use it well. If we do what needs to be done when it needs to be done, then stuff gets done and we can do it well. If we don't do what needs to be done when it needs to be done, then things are left undone, or partially finished, or badly done and then have to be redone, often over and over again. Really, unless something is done thoroughly and completely, it is not only undone but often creates further complexity that has to be dealt with.

If we don't put energy to good use, it tends to fold down on itself. We fold down on ourselves and limit our capacity to be responsive to our lives. The more that we take care of things, the more responsive we are, the easier taking care of things and responding becomes. The more we internalize attention and mutter to ourselves about how hard it is, about how much we don't want to do this or that, the more we procrastinate, the more difficult it becomes.

It's not that different from staring at a dirty glass on a table, thinking "I should go wash that glass, but I don't feel like it. But I know I should take care of it." You can sit there thinking "I should go wash that glass", for as long as you like, but nothing will happen until you actually get up off the chair, pick up the glass and walk to the sink. Then something happens.

The same thing applies to practice. Talking to yourself about your practice is not the same thing as actually doing the practice. You can sit on the couch thinking "I should go sit" for hours, but until you stand up and put one foot in front of the other to walk to the zafu, nothing is happening.

Being able to tell the difference between thinking about doing something and actually doing something is obviously very, very important and yet somehow this is often not clear for people. We can create the impression for ourselves that we are very busy, that everything requires so much effort, is so difficult, when really all we are doing is nattering to ourselves. If we put just a fraction of the energy we put into propagating states into simply doing what needs to be done, our lives would be very different.

The most important characteristic of a Zen student is follow-through. Disaster ensued for the man who bought the demon because he did not follow through. Much of the difficulty people experience in their lives is due to simply not following through.

And this is why the schedule of the monastery is so important. It is relentless and it insists that we follow through. Day after day, we do soji and samu and we sit and all of this is scheduled. It doesn't matter whether we "feel like" doing soji, whether we "feel like" doing samu, whether we "feel like" sitting. When it is time to do soji, we do it. When it is time to do samu, we do it. And when it is time to sit, we sit. When Eihei Dogen zenji established Eihei-ji, it was for the purpose of creating an environment in which monastics could engage in continuous intensive practice, both on the cushion and off the cushion. And this is also why the Roshi established Dainen-ji. For monastics, everything is scheduled: sitting, samu, food preparation, corresponding with students, practice interviews, daisan, dokusan, presenting workshops and Dharma Assemblies, transcription -- everything we do from the time we get up while it is still dark outside until we go to sleep -- all of these activities are scheduled. And the schedule continues seven days a week, 52 weeks a year, year in and year out.

The Roshi said in a recent teisho something to the effect that some people think that Zen is about "going with the flow and letting it all hang out. Which of course, creates an awful mess. In actuality, Zen is about cleaning up after all of the people who let it all hang out." And so before every sitting we wash the floors of the practice rooms, clean all of the zafu and zabuton, prepare incense bowls and candles, clean hallways and washrooms and ready the monastery for the arrival of the students who wish to participate in the discipline of Zen training. The word "discipline", Roshi reminds us, has the same root as "disciple" and so we say that "discipline" means "the willingness to learn". And one of the first things we need to learn is to follow through.

This is why all students who receive instruction through the monastery have a committed sitting schedule. Everyone in this room was once a preliminary student and will remember having been instructed to sit a minimum of once a week, on the same day and at the same time and you had to do this consistently for a period of perhaps six weeks before you could apply as a student. Why did it have to be on the same day each week? Because if you couldn't sit for 30 minutes on the

same day each week, there would have been no way you would have followed through to come to the monastery once a week to attend sittings. Why did it have to be at the same time each week? Because if you couldn't be punctual about doing your sitting, you wouldn't be punctual about arriving at the monastery on time for sittings.

All associate students who wish to eventually apply as general students are required to sit every day for 30 minutes for a period of approximately three months before they can apply as a general student. Why? Because if you can't sit every day for a three-month period, you're not going to be able to sustain that schedule in the future. And for those who live in Ottawa, without that kind of follow-through you would not be able to attend at least two sittings at the monastery each week.

And as to practicing as a probationary formal student or formal student - as the Roshi has said many times, studying directly with a Teacher is not about forming a relationship based upon personal likes and dislikes. It is about practising the schedule. It is about following through.

Following through is something we need to learn because we so easily default to habitual patterns. And so every facet of our practice, including monastic training posts, is about learning to follow through.

Many years ago, I was assigned to the daily cleaning of an antique offering table which was used to display ikebana, or arrangements of flowers and branches that the Roshi had created. Three white stones of varying sizes lay next to the ikebana and these were arranged in a particular way. My job was to remove everything from the black lacquered table, dust it, and then put it all back in exactly as I'd found it. And I was also to top up the ikebana with water when needed and remove any dead leaves from it. Well, one evening during a seven-day O-sesshin, I was facing the wall in zazen. The round had just begun and the Roshi got up to announce dokusan for students. I heard his footsteps as he walked to the ikebana and though I couldn't see him I knew he was doing something with the arrangement. He then walked around the room to where I was sitting, paused, and then a shower of dead leaves fell on me. He said "When you let the ikebana wither, you let your life wither".

Everything that we do or don't do matters. It all has an effect. It affects us directly and it affects everyone around us.

Now, sometimes you will find that you just don't feel good and it's more difficult to do what you need to do. So, in that case you need to be practical. Not self-indulgent, but practical. We are big on self-indulgence. I'll give you a little example of this.

I am now 54 years old, and in my 54 years I've seen a lot of changes. One change that has been very noticeable to me is the attitude toward the common cold. It used to be that if we had a cold, we did all of the stuff that we normally did. We went to work or school, put in a full day and simply blew our noses a lot. A flu was something different. Having the flu basically meant that you were

leaking from both ends. Then a strain of flu appeared which confused us all by mimicking the symptoms of the common cold and people began calling in sick more frequently. Then over time, if one came down with a simple head cold, that became justification for taking time off work. In more recent years we've taken this one step further with the popularization of the word "preventative". Now, at the slightest sniffle, many people will decide that they can't exert themselves because they have to stay home as a preventative measure, in case they get a cold. Or their cold gets worse.

Another area in which we can be very self-indulgent concerns sleep. People sometimes want to sleep 10 or twelve hours a day because they fear that if they don't they won't be in "prime condition".

I have something to say about all of this and it's very simple: You are never, ever, going to feel the way you did when you were sixteen, so stop thinking there is something wrong that you don't. Bodyminds are made of meat. The fact that you can see and hear and smell and taste and feel is astonishing, but nonetheless it's all made of meat and it often doesn't feel particularly good. That does not need to stop you from exerting yourself. It simply means that this is how things are and you need to do your best with how things are. You will never again feel as you did when you were sixteen. It doesn't matter how much sleep you get, how much bran you eat, how much you work out, how you wear your hair or where you spend your vacation. You will never feel like that again. If you sleep six hours a night, you'll want seven. If you sleep 8 hours a night, you'll want 10. If you sleep 10 hours a night, you'll want twelve.

I am not saying that you shouldn't take care of yourself if you are ill or are very tired. Far from it. No, what I am talking about is the difference between being practical and coddling oneself with feeling tones. When you coddle yourself, you curdle yourself.

So how do we deal with the demon? By not making deals with it. When it is time to get up out of bed, then get up out of bed. If you are going to go back to sleep, know that this is something you have made a considered decision about. Don't lie there, bartering with yourself. When it's time to sit zazen, sit zazen. Don't debate with yourself as to whether you feel like it or not. When it's time to do the dishes, do the dishes. Right now, open to reality. It's simple. Simplicity cuts through our entanglement in hope and fear and opens us to the richness of reality.

Have a good morning.

Presented by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, January 24, 2008

The other day, walking up the icy hill towards the monastery, with each step forward I slid back two inches. And I did not like that. But if I were someone who would follow that feeling of dislike, it would be more than just my feet sliding backwards. One step at a time, moving forward, sliding back. Is moving forward more "important" than sliding back? Is the intention to move forward more "real" than sliding back? Moving forward and sliding back were both part of walking up the hill. And so instead of letting the dislike limit and define experiencing, I heard the crunch of ice underfoot, saw the sparkle of ice crystals in the snow banks, felt each breath and walked up the hill, one step at a time.

It's so easy for usual mind to get into a state or take up a stance about experiencing, but it doesn't make anything any easier. It just means that not only do you need to do what you do, but you now also have to deal with all kinds of thoughts and feelings and attitudes and stances about what you are doing, most of which are negative. But even the so-called positive ones just cloud the issue and are irrelevant to the activity. But then again, clouding the issue is exactly the kind of smoke-screen that self-image conjures up to hide behind. It can pretend that the density of the clouds is actual substance.

Passion, aggression and stupidity are the three klesas or the fundamental styles with which self-image tries to poison its world, drain the world of its vitality so it is not so threatening to self-image's illusions of stability and certainty because reality is so unpredictable. The strategies and stances we take up, of holding back or pushing forward or distancing and ignoring, are so habitual that most of the time we don't even notice them until after we've allowed them to play out for a time.

Instead of falling into stuff, stand up. Let things fall where they may and just stand clear. If you stand clear enough, you will see that there are no "things" and never were. But regardless of whether you understand this or not, the important thing is to see clearly, hear clearly, sit, stand, walk and lie down clearly. When you stand you should be clearly standing. When you sit you should be clearly sitting. Is this clear?

In Immo, "Suchness", Eihei Dogen zenji says,

In understanding Suchness, understand falling down to the ground as Suchness and getting up as Such. Then, falling down is not a problem. There is an old saying that came from India: "If you fall down on the ground, you stand by using the ground to get up. You can't stand up without a ground." This means that if you fall down, you just use what you have fallen down on to stand up again. There is no other way to stand up. This is such good advice that you should wake up just by hearing it because it is the path of liberating body and mind. If you want to know the central point of the enlightenment of the Awakened Ones, here it is: it is like someone who has fallen to the

ground using it to stand up. Look deeply into this and you can cut through how you have identified yourself in the past, what you think you are in the present, and what you think you will be in the future and just yield into Suchness.

Everything, including our perception of ourselves at any given moment, is an arrangement, a gathering of details. Everything is impermanent, rising and falling, coming and going. There are no objects, no things, no self that can be found anywhere. A moment of recognition is a "dharma", a gateless gate through which attention can fall past itself. In this, "Noticing" is the starting point, but you still have to go through the gate. The moment of noticing is the ground on which attention falls which we can use to push ourselves up. Falling down, use the ground to push yourself up.

In a series of commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's text, "Immo", Anzan Hoshin roshi says,&nbsp;

At the edge of each moment,  
on this side the past is gone,  
on this side the future has not happened,  
and in the centre  
is nothing at all  
because this moment is utterly ungraspable,  
is already  
gone.

Falling down as Suchness, getting up as Such. In a moment of seeing how you are, how you seem to be experiencing experience, question into what you are experiencing.

In a series of classes Anzan Hoshin roshi presented on the 8,000 Line Prajnaparamita Teachings, he says:

We must examine absolutely everything, openly and clearly. We must take nothing for granted: not who we are, not our memories, not what the body is, not what the mind is, not what our little compulsions are telling us to do, not what our tendencies are telling us to do, not what our fear is telling us to do, not what our anger is telling us to do. Not just those, but any recognition that we might have, any moment of insight, any state no matter how coarse or subtle, must be looked into clearly. Looking into it clearly, we see that the thought, in its essential and primordial nature is transparent luminosity. Whatever one is aware of is the display of Awareness. Luminosity, (prabashvara) means the ability to illuminate, to turn on the lights in a room and see what is in that room. So Luminosity means the ability to know. And so what is necessary is the recognition that thought is no thought. Thought is not an object; thought does not exist on its own; there is no one which is doing the thinking; the thought has no substance whatsoever. The thought is the display of the Luminosity of Knowing, just as a ripple on water is the display of water. From the point of

view of the water there is no ripple, there is just water.

There is what is actually going on and then there is what you "add" to what is going on. Where you can most clearly see the difference is in zazen. First and foremost you are sitting on a zafu, in a room. You are not having a conversation with anyone. If you are having a conversation with someone in your head, the sane thing to do is to recognize that that is not what is going on in reality, to recognize that you are conjuring up phantom people, phantom situations. If you stop following that, where are you? Back on the cushion, sitting in the room. It can be as stark a difference as turning a light bulb on and off.

What self-image can conjure up to "add-on" to experiencing can seem to be very convincing. States of hope and fear that immediately distort; states of poverty, grasping, self-loathing, anger, frustration, confusion, discursiveness, boredom, dissatisfaction, sadness are all states that retract attention away from reality. But mindfulness can come up through any covering and any covering can be used as the ground to push yourself up from. Don't just lie there, in that state. Get up. Sit up straight regardless of what the state is telling you.

The states I just listed are one range of states that contracted attention can produce. But here is another: Becoming brittle, critical, distancing yourself, peering out at the world with distrust even in situations where it would be in your best interest to open and meet experiencing with interest and fully participate. Stepping back and then blaming others for the distance you've created, feeling misunderstood and unappreciated.

Then there's states of dullness, disinterest, not giving a fig about anything and just letting yourself fall asleep. Stupidity klesa is always there to fall back on because it doesn't take as much energy as passion or aggression. But don't fall back on it because it will consume you whole. Sit up straight in the midst of it instead of becoming it.

Eihei Dogen zenji also says in the Genjokoan, "The Question of Our Lives",

"To practice by pushing ahead, meeting the numberless experiences as a self and witnessing them thus, is delusion. When the vast expanse of experiences move forward and practice and realize the self, this is Awakening."

Whether the states you experience seem "strong" or "weak", "up" or "down", "good" or "bad", the antidote is the same: Open attention to what you are actually experiencing in this moment. When you are sitting, just sit. When seeing, just see. When hearing, just hear. Whatever you think of yourself, whatever your past experience has been, whether you are clever or stupid, this moment stands forth as it is and only by practising can you meet it. But the moment is not a place or a thing. It's not something you can "gather yourself together" for, take a run at it and then dive

through it, as though it were a tiny opening in space. Aligning with this moment is not something you can "make happen" by hunkering down around the breath right or by laying in wait to notice every sound. There is no ninja-self inside of you who can throw attention outward like a shuriken to nail experiencing. This is grasping at sounds and feelings, grasping at forms and names, watching yourself doing that and thereby deepening delusion. Stand clear of all of this. Let go and let the mind be the colours and forms and sounds and sensations. You're not a ninja. And it's a good thing too. Ninjas were hired killers. While self-image tries to kill reality, reality is just too big for it. And self-image is not who you truly are.

In "Immo", "Suchness", Dogen says,

"If you fall into fixated experiences you stand free by recognizing their Open nature. If you try to stand free without yielding fixation into the Open expanse of the Awareness in which experiences arise, you can never stand free."

What he is saying is that you cannot open a state from within a state. You can only open a state by opening around it. If you notice that you are falling into a state such as anger, you can't "get out" of being in a state of anger by staying in it, by examining it, by talking to yourself about it, by trying to take up another stance about it. There is only one way to liberate yourself from it and that is by releasing the knot of attention you are experiencing as anger into the sensations and colours and forms and sounds. Let the knot loosen and open. Stop worrying about winning or losing because if you are consumed by anger, you are already lost. Just stand clear. Let it all fall where it may and then begin again.

"If you fall into objectifying Openness as an abstraction and retract attention away from experiences you must stand free by grounding attention to the earthy and vivid details of experiences."

Instructions for the space cadet. Openness is not a feeling or an attitude and there is nothing vague about it. It is an activity, something we must do. Attitudes and stances about openness can be cut through by gently insisting that attention open to detail. You can only practise for a split second at a time and then the effort must be renewed.

"If you try to stand free by separating attention from what is arising within it you can never stand free."

This one sentence is luminous in its clarity. Just as you cannot be separate from the world, what is arising within attention is not separate from the world. You can only make it appear to yourself that whatever you fixate on is all that there is. Fixation is a form of basic ignorance, pretending that one

is bound, pretending that there is a solidity to things that does not exist.

Yesterday I walked down that same hill I walked up a few days ago. But today was not as cold and the snow in the streets had turned a dirty gray-brown. The sun, so far away at this time of year was not even as bright as the moon at night. But it was a good walk. As Zen Master Yunmen once said "Every day is a good day". If you're not experiencing it as such, practise Suchness. Let things fall where they may. Stand clearly, sit clearly, walk clearly, lie down clearly. Circumstances and conditions shift and change, but all that you experience is always arising within a larger context.&nbsp;

Dharma Assembly: What? Why?

by Ven. Shikai Zuiko O-sensei

What is the Dharma?

Dharma with a big "D" means the Teachings of Awakening, The Teachings of Reality. A small "d" dharma describes phenomena, a mental event, a moment of experiencing, any moment of experiencing experienced by the bodymind and, as your practice deepens, more and more frequently known and practised.

What is a Dharma Assembly?

A Dharma Assembly is a gathering together of Sangha: monks, Teachers and practice advisors, and any students, formal, general or associate, for an extended period of practice and study of the Teachings of Reality. Dharma Assemblies are a long-standing and traditional part of practice. Essentially, Dharma Assemblies are sesshin for students that are not deshi (formal students of a Teacher).

Who May Attend?

All students may attend. As there are a limited number of places all students must pre-register. As well, knowing the number of attendees is essential for ingredient shopping and the preparation of meals.

When?

A Dharma Assembly starts at 9:30 a.m. and closes at 9:00 p.m. on a Saturday. Notification of the date is always posted in the eMirror.

Where?

Dharma Assemblies are held in the Hatto, the formal Dharma Hall on the second floor. Meals are taken in the Zendo on the first floor.

How?

Formal entry starts the assembly. Formal entry is similar to that at the beginning of every 6:00 a.m. formal sitting during the week. During Sesshin and O-sesshin formal entry is practised at the beginning of both the early morning and the evening sittings. The Formal Entry opening a Dharma Assembly is excellent preparation for any associate student who may be interested in practising as a general student in the future and for general students who attend the morning formal sittings and may be interested in eventually practising as formal students.

During the Assembly a Teacher or a practice advisor presents a Dharma Talk to the assembled practitioners. Talks are recorded and are played at subsequent sittings. Sitting periods are 30 minutes long and kinhin is practised between sitting rounds. Daisan and practice interviews are scheduled.

Lunch and supper provide an introduction to oryoki, a traditional form for eating meals which is practised during sesshin and O-sesshin.

Why Should Students Make the Effort to Attend?

Dharma Assemblies provide a taste of more intensive practice for all students. Instruction is given which helps students mature their practice. All level of students benefit from this practical introduction to the forms. Formal students who have already established a strong mindfulness practice have an opportunity to practice the forms in more detail and offer, through their example, unspoken instruction and support for general and associate students.

General students who may have an interest in one day applying as a probationary formal student or who have wondered what it is like to practise as a formal student are provided an introduction to longer, more intensive practice which helps cut through unquestioned assumptions, beliefs, and misunderstandings, about longer periods of practice. They may be intimidated by thoughts of sesshin or O-sesshin and with no experience of longer periods of practice often find their imagined prospect daunting.

Associate students have an opportunity to sit with monastics and students who have been practising more intensively. There is an opportunity to practise the forms they will encounter if and when they attend general sittings.

All students gain a better understanding of the functioning of the monastery and are encouraged to attend as often as they are able.

## Dharma Talk 1: So Intimate It Cannot Be Personal

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, June 11, 2011

Intimacy is simply being open to the intimacy of experiencing which is already present and always available. This is what Zen practice actually is: opening to this openness, being a bodhisattva.

Intimacy is the recognition that everything within your life is alive AS your life. Every moment of experiencing, regardless of how you feel about it, regardless of what you think of it, is this intimacy, and everything you experience points to this intimacy whether you recognize it or not. Zen practice is seeing how we turn away from this intimacy and releasing this contraction.

On your way into the monastery this morning, you walked through the Sanmon, the Mountain Gate, and up the stone path. On either side of the stones of the path, an array of colours met your eyes as the many different greens of ferns and moss, the small flowering plants and ground cover. &nbsp;The air in the monastery grounds, cooled by the water in the ponds, is cooler than the air down the street. Did you feel how it was soft on your skin? And as you walked on the path, step after step, you were being observed by countless birds from overhead branches or from inside the thick hedge, calling from all directions. Perhaps you noticed some of these details. Perhaps you were so caught up in just 'getting into the building on time' that you missed most of this. Perhaps you were even thinking about what you would do after you left or what was happening before you came or even last week or something that has never happened and never will. &nbsp;In any case, whether you were allowing attention to open to those details or not, there was intimacy with your life. The question is, how intimate were you with your life? How responsive were you? If your attention was folded down into contraction, you will have noticed very little about that walk up the pathway. So you see, this intimacy we are speaking of is not something you are ever denied, it is something you can choose to open to.

You don't have to wait for experiencing to be arranged in a certain way or for you to be interested in how experiencing is to open to this intimacy. Even when you are not feeling well, when you're tired or grumpy, you can still be intimate with experiencing. You can have a pounding headache and still open attention to the context in which you and the pounding of your head are taking place because you are aware of the headache. The question is - what is it that is aware? How is it that you are aware of anything at all? If you have a headache, trying to manipulate it with your practice isn't going to cure it. Take an aspirin if you want to change it. But while it's going on, practise with it. Practice isn't about manipulating experiencing so that you can limit and contain it and only experience what you want to experience. You can't control reality. You can influence it, but if your

attention is contracted, you will inevitably influence it in ways that will deepen contraction.

Wanting to manipulate experience by turning practice into a strategy or a formula is a misunderstanding that beginning students in particular fall into. This strategizing comes up while sitting zazen, but also when you're not sitting. It comes up concerning work issues such as dissatisfaction with a job or a career, or a living situation, but also with more personal issues such as relationships. This is why you spend so much of your sitting time pondering these issues - you think that if you just spend enough time thinking about them, you'll reach some state of perfect mental clarity and you'll know exactly what to do; you'll have the formula for it, the cure. And of course, the fact that all of this is only going on inside your head and reality is not inside your head is something that you will tend to overlook when you're really caught up in it.

Because you spend so much time thinking about strategies and designing formulas for yourselves, topics of this sort will also come up from time to time in practice interviews and daisan. It's not that this is a problem - far from it, students are welcome to bring up any topic they wish to discuss in interviews and daisan. But I think it's important to understand how limiting this can be.

If you ask a practice advisor to tell you how you should respond to your boss or your significant other when they say or do this or that, yes, the practice advisor could probably put together a response that would be very clever. But the problem is that if they were to do that, all they would be giving you is one of many possible solutions to this particular problem and it's not YOUR solution. You won't have learned anything from that. Why? Because what you've asked for is a formula that will only work in a very specific set of conditions. The next time an issue comes up, that formula won't work because the circumstances will be different. And there's no guarantee that it will work anyway, because the practice advisor or Dharma Teacher is not IN that situation and does not know all of the details of it.

What we can do, however, is talk about the habitual patterns that people tend to fall into so that they can recognize them and avoid certain pitfalls.

Everyone wants intimacy but there are many things people call 'intimacy' and most are not intimate at all. Many are what you settle for when you are not really being intimate with your life - the touchy-feelly kind of intimacy people try to share that comes and goes and goes and is gone more often than it is present. There are many patterns people engage in around this, so I will bring up a few of them.

Relationships aren't all they're made out to be. As Anzan roshi has often pointed out, ninety-five percent of the time you're trying not to get in trouble with the other person. Another five percent can be nice or kind of nice, or just slightly better than not being in trouble. And for the last five percent, which is spread throughout, you're in trouble. This is not intimacy, it's the result of following habitual patterns that involve a lot of 'leaning'. People who are in intimate relationships do tend to lean on each other a great deal and I don't mean the kind of leaning one

does with an injured hip. No, the other kind of leaning - wanting someone to prop you up, jolly you out of your states or distract you from them. When people are sad or angry or confused, there is the expectation that the other person will be available to hear their stories, sympathize with them and try to make them feel better and this can become more than a full-time job, it can become a life-long job. Even if there is something really serious going on, your first obligation as concerns your states, is to work with them yourself. Looking to another person to do this for you is sheer laziness. When both parties do this to excess, their time together is spent primarily looking at each other, continuously trying to gauge the kind of states that are present, day after day after day.

If I were to use a metaphor for good and bad relationships, it would be this: There are two people walking down the street together and as they walk, they are looking at the sky, the ground, the trees, the buildings and perhaps commenting on those. Or they might talk to one another about possibilities that may unfold for them or they may just walk together in silence. But they are attentive to the details of the walking, of their surroundings, and that of course includes each other, but without an enormous sense of problem. A bad relationship is like two people walking down the street but they are seeing nothing but each other. They watch each other, continually worrying about what the other is thinking, what facial expressions might mean, wondering what is going on in the other person's mind, wondering about their relationship, wondering "do you love me?" which is stifling and claustrophobic

Relationships with other people, be it with a significant other or family members or friends, provide us with countless opportunities to notice how the three klesas determine for us the criteria by which someone is worthwhile or not. If your attention is bound up by habitual patterns of contraction, then these will dictate how you view other people. Again, first and foremost, it is your responsibility to work with your own states and habitual patterns. Because these are so habitual and you feel so justified in propagating them, your attention becomes consumed by them and it is very difficult for you to recognize that they are even present unless you make the effort to open attention. And I mean as much of the time as is possible. Any state you experience has one agenda and that is to continue itself. Practice is about interrupting states. It's not convenient and it is never habitual. It requires an effort to open to reality in the midst of your life. But there is time to do this and there is space in your life to practice. If you can find the time to spend as much time as you do lost in habitual thoughts and feelings, you can find the time to practice.

The intimacy people wish to find in their relationships does not begin as romantic engagement. It doesn't start with becoming personal with another person. Real intimacy is intimacy with your whole life and it is only to the extent that you can be intimate with your own life that you can be intimate with the life of another. I think this is really quite obvious. If your attention is so folded down that you are spending a good portion of your time lost in storylines and feeling tones and strategies, you make yourself unavailable and unresponsive to reality. Other people are not your thoughts and feelings about them.

If you are in a relationship that was formed on a weak foundation and you practice, it may fall

apart. And that won't be because practising will make you cold or indifferent. It will be because you will begin to understand what intimacy really is. If you are in a relationship that was built on a strong foundation and practise it will become even stronger, even more intimate. The reason for this is that intimacy is too intimate to be personal. The intimacy of the bodhisattva, of one who is opening to openness is not just intimacy with another person, it is intimacy with the whole of one's experiencing. It includes other people but is not dependent on other people. And this intimacy is something you can practise right now.

When you are sitting and choose to open past your storylines to feel the actual contact of thumb against thumb, you are practising intimacy. A step in kinhin is intimacy with the sensations of the foot, the texture of the floor beneath the foot and the coolness of the air that passes beneath the foot as it is lifted to take the next step. And further, opening attention to the whole bodymind, balanced and at ease, intimate with the sensations of the warmth and weight of the hands held in shashu resting against the diaphragm, feeling the breath come and go; moving through the space of the room; opening to the seeing as you move through the space and the space moves past you and intimate with the space of experiencing in which all of this is occurring, When you pay attention to the sensations of the bodymind, the sounds you are hearing and the colours and forms you are seeing, you are opening past self-absorption - this same self-absorption that limits and constricts the relationships you have with other people. This intimate practice of zazen shows you how your attention abstracts and recoils from present experiencing so that you can release contraction and become intimate with the life that lives as all lives, as your life.

There is much more to look into concerning these topics and we shall continue to do so in the next Dharma Talk.

Dharma Talk 2: This Time It's Personal

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, September 24th, 2011

Please don't take this personally... because what we consider to be our personality is generally only a gathering of contractions: grasping and clenching and recoiling and refusing the openness of reality. You will often hear Anzan Hoshin roshi, Eihei Dogen zenji, Keizan Jokin zenji and the other Awakened Ancestors speak of "intimacy". Yet students seldom understand what they mean. "Intimacy" seems to be something they experience only very rarely and momentarily, it is something exceptional. And yet the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors speak of it as the ordinary quality of each moment.

Intimacy is not something you are ever denied, it is always available to you and you can choose to open to in any moment. It's not dependent on where you are, or on another person, because it starts with you, with how your attention is arranged. While practising zazen, you can see that there are times when your attention can be quite open and you are able to notice more of the details of experiencing. But at other times it becomes very coarse. Sometimes you're sitting and you just don't care about practising at all and instead will let yourself wander off into storylines that could be about anything: food, sex, work issues, replaying an angry conversation, thinking about something you need to plan out. Or perhaps a flurry of 'creative' thoughts will come up about some project you are working on. When you are sitting and you allow your attention to wander aimlessly you can see how easily it falls into the three klesas of passion, aggression and stupidity - grasping, avoiding, ignoring.

Now, of course this doesn't just happen when you're sitting on the zafu. What you are seeing when you sit is a more detailed glimpse into how your attention is most of the time. You just don't notice it most of the time because.....well....don't take this personally, but for the most part, other than during those brief moments during the day when it might occur to you to practise, you're caught up in passion, aggression and stupidity along with everyone else. Self-image continuously sorts experiencing into what it likes (passion, or grasping), what it doesn't like (aggression, pushing away and struggling), and then everything else, the 99.9% of experiencing that it can't be bothered with (ignorance) because it doesn't fit into the categories of liking and disliking.

What changes during those moments when you remember to practice is that you are practicing this intimacy of which I speak. Instead of just allowing yourself to follow the compulsion of states, you are practising intimacy of hearing, of seeing, of bodily sensation, intimacy with and as the space of experiencing in which everything is arising. And this is very different from viewing oneself and the world as a collection of objects, liked, disliked, or dismissed.

So now we'll go into some of the topics related to intimacy that students often would like to raise in daisan or practice interviews but are hesitant to bring up. I will take the plunge and bring them up for you, beginning with sexual energy, which is probably at the top of the list of uncomfortable topics for students. This is an area of people's lives that generates a lot of confusion and entanglement and can be so contracted that it becomes quite painful for them, so I think we should discuss it.

Lay students spend a considerable amount of time and energy on the play of attraction and repulsion, breeding cycles, having babies and creating their own villages, so to speak. Not that there's anything wrong with that, if that's what you want to do. In fact, because of social conditioning, all of that is considered "normal" and if we aren't doing things in ways that are easily recognizable to the people around us as 'normal', we are considered 'strange'. From the perspective of a monastic, though, all of THAT is very strange. Once a woman becomes pregnant, the next 20 years of her life are accounted for. There is very little she can do beyond looking after the child and taking care of all of the tasks and responsibilities that go with parenthood. For her

mate, the next 20 years are similarly accounted for and during that 20 years, neither of them can really practice intensively. But it's fine if this is what they want to do with their lives as long as there is the recognition that such decisions can have far-reaching consequences.

Monastics of the Northern Mountain Order who live in the monastery and are training as Teachers take a Vow of Celibacy because they have dedicated their lives to the Teaching and practice of Dharma. If one is working closely with students there can be no question of any compromise of either their own practice or the practice of the students they are working with. We all know of the disastrous situations that have come about because teachers have become involved with their students. This is tremendously damaging to everyone concerned and to the entire Sangha. But in addition, the work of Teaching others is much more than a full-time job and so it would be completely unfair to commit oneself to a romantic relationship - one would simply not have time to spend with a partner. Or with one's students. But being celibate is not a matter of suppressing or ignoring sexual energy or of 'diverting' it into yet another obsession. We are taught how to work with it, to practise with it, to open the energy of it so that it becomes just energy. I am not going to go into further explanation about how this is taught because it involves foundations of understanding and realization that take place within the context of monastic training as such.

Within our tradition of training, laymonks are permitted to marry, have children, and can live outside of the monastery. Under some circumstances they can train as "practice advisors" and may be authorized to give instruction to others concerning some aspects of the practice, but they are required to work within certain parameters.

And of course, for lay students (associate, general or formal students) there are no prohibitions concerning sexual energy, although the instructions for basic mindfulness and releasing contraction apply just as much to sexual activity as they do anything else one might do. People can get contracted about anything, including what they understand as 'love'.

And that brings me to the point I want to go into - the issue with all of this is not really sexual energy as such, it is the various contractions that can form around it.

There is nothing wrong with sexual energy as such. The whole bodymind is always alive with sensations, pleasant, unpleasant and neutral, but basically the bodymind is inherently joyful. For this reason, men can experience an erection simply when walking down the street, feeling the sunlight on their skin. For women, sensuality is very much related to sexual energy and can express itself in a myriad of different ways. Sexual energy, like any other energy of bodymind can be very open, or it can be congealed and people tend to become amazingly fixated about sexual attraction.

By the time you are in your twenties, the bodymind, as it actually is, is losing interest in the 'high excitement' of attraction. You have to work harder at it, in part because it's all become quite familiar, but also because the bodymind is ageing. After you hit 30, when you look in the mirror,

you begin to see the traces of your mother or father looking back at you - a gray hair here and there, the laugh lines, just the beginnings of a little bit of sag or cellulite, so you work a little harder to maintain it all. You go to a cafe for a cup of coffee first thing in the morning and they're playing really loud heavy metal over the sound system, and though you don't like it, you still want to feel as young as the twenty year-old behind the counter and can't quite bring yourself to be the old fuddy-duddy asking them to turn it down either. You begin to realize you're 'in-between' youth and 'not-youth' and that can be quite uncomfortable. When you turn 40, it starts becoming much more difficult to pump up the kind of states you used to experience when you were a teenager. By this time people are usually engaging in a certain amount of fantasizing concerning their romantic relationships. You're really past the time of breeding cycles and the bodymind is feeling the effects of 40 years of gravity. So where at 20 it would have been easy for you to become aroused, you now have to work at it and adding mental imagery and focusing on that is one way of coaxing the bodymind to try to behave as though it were 20. After 50, your mother or father is definitely staring back at you in the mirror; the sag and cellulite aren't co-operating with your attempts to tighten and firm and strange things are happening. Men's ears begin to sprout hair; women sprout mutant hairs that grow to odd lengths in strange places - like out of the side of their neck or on an upper arm, a whisker where there were no whiskers previously; nose hairs develop a plan of their own; your eyebrows turn into wires and you start making funny grunting sounds when you bend down to tie your shoes. But you're still very concerned about how attractive you are -- or are not.

What runs as a thread through all of these different stages of one's life is an ongoing anxiety about how we appear to ourselves, and of course, how we appear to others, whether we are attractive or repulsive; whether other people are attractive or repulsive.

I have been a celibate monastic for over 20 years, but I was married before I became a monk. Twice, in fact. So I do know enough about sex to speak about it from the perspective of practice. As I stated previously, there is nothing wrong with sexual energy. It can be very nice. But it is not necessary to focus and fixate attention on a limited range of perceptions while having sex. You can feel whole-bodily; you can still see and hear and you can engage in this activity with open attention. And if you do choose to open attention and practise while you are having sex you will have a better time and so will your partner. There. I've said it. It's not often you'll hear a monastic talk about sex in quite this way I think. But it is true and the thing is, why wouldn't you practise while having sex? Why is it necessary to become so focused that most of your sense bases shut down?

Just as you need to open attention when you are sitting zazen in order to release contraction, you need to open attention when you are doing anything else, including having sex. The alternative is to make a limited range of sensations the only thing that is going on when they're not. To be even more direct about this I will add that when people become very focused on just those sensations, for all they're really interacting with their partner, the other person may as well not even be there. Most of who and what they are is blocked out.

How do you block out another person? Well, fantasizing will do that quite effectively and people do like to fantasize to a surprising extent. Focusing on one aspect of the other person, physically or emotionally will also block out most other information about them. When you sit in zazen, it's so easy to see how you can almost completely ignore the fact that you are sitting on a zafu with your hands in the mudra because you become so focused on a thought. So of course, you're quite good at diverting all of your attention into whatever seems important to you. I think that's pretty obvious. But you don't need to do that.

That the eye is drawn to a leg, the shape of a backside, the ripple of a muscle, the curve of a hip or a breast happens not because the seeing dictates it. It happens because this is how attention is moving. The person being seen is a collection of knowings - heart beating, breath breathing, thoughts and feelings rising and falling. In fact, they are the presencing of Awareness in itself. But we can reduce them to the curve of a hip. Interesting, don't you think?

Now I'm going to speak a little about online porn because it is so easy to see the focusing involved in it because it's so extreme. Fascination with online porn is shared by both men and women, but has more appeal to men, I think. The reason for this is because men tend to view women more as bits and pieces. Through focusing attention, it is possible to leave out most of what is seen, for instance a whole person, and reduce them to breasts or buttocks or whatever bit or piece is of most interest. But the fact of the matter is that what is being seen IS a whole person, not just bits and pieces of an image on a computer monitor. And one of the biggest problems with online porn is that you are not actually interacting with that person as they actually are, you're interacting with a state - your own state - and if a lot of time is spent doing this, it will inevitably affect how you interact with other people in real life. Looking at images and engaging in whatever behavior results from looking at them is not so much the problem. The real issue with this is that during that time, people become very contracted through focusing attention. In fact without this focusing and refusal of openness it all makes no sense to be interested in it.

As part of demonstrating the interaction between focusing, thought and bodily effect, Shikai O-sensei sometimes describes someone thinking about cutting a lemon in half and biting into it. If you focus strongly enough on that thought, you will experience something of the puckering of your mouth and the salivation that would occur if you were to actually do that. Similarly, if you focus on one dimensional images of someone you know nothing about intently enough, certain kinds of physical states will occur in response to the focusing.

For some people this becomes such a problem that they have to enter into addiction counseling to control the amount of time they spend on their carefully bookmarked porn sites. But the question is, is it the images that are the problem? Is the fact that these sites exist that is the problem? No, the problem is that people don't understand the process of focusing and fixating attention

Now I've mentioned that this can have a pronounced effect on how you interact with other people. That is simply true. By engaging in this fabricated form of 'intimacy', which is not intimacy at all,

you will make it increasingly difficult to be open to the intimacy of a relationship with another human being who is not a photograph.

That's a fairly extreme example, but if you observe how you are you will find many examples of how you focus and fixate, how you objectify other people, how you sort experiencing into 'self' and 'other'

Now I do want to make it very clear that I am not speaking about any of this to talk you out of anything. What you do is of your own choosing and we, of the Practice Council do not dictate lifestyle. So this is not any about judgment or condemnation of your preferences. What I am pointing out is that anything you do can be done with open attention or with contraction and contraction always leads to further contraction. So it's not that I am so much concerned with what you do as I am with how you do it. If you choose more and more often to open attention in the midst of whatever you do, old patterns of contracted thought and feeling will loosen and drop away of their own accord. And this is part of how you can integrate your practice.

For self-image, sex is never just sex, just as money is never just money. But for the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors everything is always just THIS. Just this moment of present experiencing, just this moment of seeing, of hearing, of touching, tasting, feeling. But you can notice how attention will tend to narrow and focus and as the Roshi has said, the recognition of this is an opportunity to notice how the three klesas determine for us the criteria by which someone is worthwhile or not. And to release this into simply being intimate with experience as a whole.

We will continue with the topic of intimacy in the next Dharma Talk in this series.

## Entering the Gates of Practice

Zen is not just a "religion", a "philosophy", a "way of life", or a "belief". It is a practice. It is something that you do. Doing Zen practice under the guidance of a Zen Teacher means that you are entering into the practice and realization of the Buddha that has been transmitted directly from Teacher to student for two thousand six hundred years.

It is very rare to have the opportunity to begin such practice, difficult to be considered eligible to

become a student, and very difficult to do and master the practice. This is not only because the sitting practice itself can be rigorous, but because the Teachers and the training ask us to put down our assumptions, philosophies and stories, and to enter directly into our experience of our life. Anzan roshi calls this "being interested in your life." This is the most simple thing of all, but it is also the most difficult because we tend to think that our lives are the things that we are doing, the names that we bear, the family and friends that we have. This "life" that the Roshi calls us to live is the very fact of seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling, thinking and feeling. The point of Zen practice, what we refer to as the "Great Matter", is to realize for ourselves "what this life is, and who it is that is living it".

This means that we must put aside all of our ideas and begin to question ourselves thoroughly and with much more honesty than has ever been required of us. Whether we are an associate member who is only beginning to practice, or is only occasionally practising, or are a general student, a formal student, or a monk, the main issue of our practice is commitment to honesty and a deep questioning that does not settle for easy answers.

In order to make our commitment and the sharpening of such questioning clear to us, there have always been "gates" that we must enter and leave behind us throughout the long history of Zen practice. Before we discuss the details of the Gates of Practice of the White Wind Zen Community, it might be helpful for us to understand the traditional gates that have been used in China and Japan, the places in which Indian Buddhism developed into the distinctive and direct style that we can call "Zen."

In approaching a traditional Japanese Zen monastery to begin practice, you would be expected to have abandoned everything that you hold dear so that you could face yourself unencumbered. You would have a few personal necessities in a backpack. In front of the monastery, there would be a high wall with a large, ornate and heavy gate called the Sanmon or Mountain Gate.

Beginning Zen is like climbing a mountain; it requires effort to clamber free of our illusions and beliefs, until we reach the clear air and vast vantage of the peak. Knocking on the gate, eventually the door would swing open to reveal the gatekeeper, usually a huge and unbelievably ferocious monk. Making your request for admittance, you would be politely but briefly told that the monastery was full, too poor to accept another student and that, in any case, you wouldn't like it. If you persist in knocking after the gatekeeper had closed the door on you the first time, the monk would return and begin to berate you for being too stupid to understand this simple statement, swear at you, and would most likely swat at your head a few times. After a while, the monk would refuse to answer your knock.

Now what will you do? Do you really want to do this after all? If you do, you would neatly lean your bundle against a step and sit with your knees up and your face against your knees. The angle of the posture would be silently noted in detail by the watching gatekeeper, who might intermittently chase you off a few more times. When night falls, you might have to remain seated on the steps

until morning, or you might be allowed into the monastery to sleep in a hallway overnight and be given a small meal. In any case, the next morning would find you on the steps again, going through the same business. On the second night, you might be allowed to stay "overnight" in the tanga, a semi-open reception area. The next day you would be expected to sit in a lotus posture in the tanga, and to be found in that posture should anyone happen by. This excruciating and lonely experience is called tangaryo.

At the end of the day, you might be introduced to a monk, a senior student of the Teacher, who would question you closely about your background and your motives for coming to the monastery. If the monk feels that you are sincere, you would be given a place in the Zendo on a probationary basis and shown how to do zazen. It would be anywhere from several weeks to a year before you would be formally introduced to the Teacher and begin to actually practice Zen.

Anzan Hoshin roshi's own experience of entering the gates of Hakukaze-ji was much the same as this, even though it happened in Canada (you can read some of his recollections of this in Zanmai 7). In the very beginnings of the Zen Community over four decades ago, the Roshi would personally meet and interview all applicants for training, and use his own direct methods to help the person to question into their motivation and aspirations for practice. He would generally accept only one out of every 15 or so. As this is no longer practical, the Roshi and the Practice Council of the Zen Community have designed a format to help those interested in taking up Zen to become aware of the commitment necessary for strong or even occasional practice. Naturally our gates don't involve glowering gatekeepers or leaving everything behind. The point of Zen practice is that we must each endeavour to find a way to practice it in our own lives, our jobs, in the midst of our families and so on.

The first gate was in fact the interest that brought you into contact with the Zen Community in the first place. This usually takes a great deal of courage as it is.

The next gate involves meeting with practice advisors and Teachers to ask questions, discuss your background, and receive instruction in the beginning postures of body, breath, speech and mind. When you leave the Zen Centre or one of its branches, each time that you practice you are actually going through many small gates. If you are living too far from the monastery or one of its Branch Centers to commute, you can receive instruction through our "Long-distance Training Program."

If you have decided to return and receive further instruction and want to have the opportunity to deepen your practice, you may, after several orientation interviews over a period of weeks, apply to become an associate student within the White Wind Zen Community. You would then write a brief letter to the Roshi regarding your background and your aspirations for practice; on the basis of all of this he may approve your entry into the Zen Community. As an associate student, you will have the opportunity to attend sittings designed for associate students, of borrowing recordings of Teachings by the Roshi and the Dharma Teachers and have access to our extensive Media

Website, and study our books, such as *Four Gates of Zen Practice*, *The Heart of This Moment*, *Before Thinking* and *The Straight Path*. You will also receive practice interviews or daisan on a regular basis, to clarify questions about your practice as they arise, to deepen your practice and so that misunderstandings that might weaken or misdirect your practice can be addressed.

After a while, you might decide that you would like to have more opportunities to study and practice. If you establish a daily sitting schedule and have completed the basic curriculum of study for an associate student, you could speak to a Dharma Teacher or practice advisor about becoming a general student. This would mean writing a letter to the Roshi stating your intentions and aspirations, summarizing your practice to this point. As a general student, you will be required to maintain a strong practice at home and at the monastery. General students continue to receive daisan with Dharma Teachers and interviews with practice advisors, but can also write to request dokusan with the Roshi on matters that they feel are appropriate.

Upon being accepted as a general student, you should make a Temple Dana of \$108 as a recognition of your commitment and in the responsibility that each student within the Zen Community has to provide a strong practice environment for themselves and others.

Associate students may also belong to other traditions, or be studying under another Teacher. Nonetheless, when you come to the Zen Centre to sit, you should only do the practice you have been taught here. General students, however, have committed themselves to the Way of Zen as taught by the Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi, Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei and Ven. Shikai Zuiko O-sensei

After a minimum a year of practice as a general student and having studied the Teachings designed for general students and after having engaged in regular monthly retreat practice, if you decide you would like to become a deshi or formal student of a Teacher you can apply as a probationary formal student. Students who are intending to eventually engage in monastic training (either as a lay monk or as a full monk) may apply to become formal students of the Roshi. Students who do not wish to engage in monastic training may apply as a student of a Dharma Teacher. This training will involve a period of at least one year or more of probationary practice during which you will receive frequent daisan or dokusan, so that you may establish the foundations for a strong Teacher-student relationship and develop a clear understanding of the radical challenges that your Zen practice will bring to you. Students who train under the direction of a Dharma Teacher meet with the Roshi from time to time, but receive the majority of their instruction from their Teacher.

Following at least a year or so of training as a probationary formal student, and having completed the curriculum of study designed for probationary formal students, you may request, or it may be suggested to you that you begin to train for jukai, receiving the Transmission of the Bodhisattva Precepts and a Dharma name. It should be mentioned here, for the benefit of new students, that the Dharma names that most formal students have are not signs that they are "enlightened";

rather, they indicate the particular style with which that person approaches practice, and are thus used as reminders.

Persons applying to become a branch student follow much the same procedure as that for associate students. Branch students who wish to deepen their practice can come to Dainen-ji for periods of residential training or retreat. Eventually, as their understanding of practice grows, they may also apply to become formal students.

Students receiving instruction through the Long-distance Training Program receive initial instruction as “preliminary students” from the Practice Council to clarify their understanding of Zen practice prior to applying at the first category of enrolment as a “public associate student” (“public” indicates that they are training at a distance from the monastery). As and if they deepen their practice sufficiently, they can apply as a “public general student”, a “public probationary formal student” or a “public formal student”. It is possible for students practising at a distance to deepen their practice further by training as laymonks if they are able to come to Dainen-ji at least once or twice a year to receive face-to-face instruction and Transmission. Full monastic training requires full-time residential training in the monastery for a period of years.&nbsp;

As our practice continues and deepens, whether as an associate or general student, a branch student, a public student, or a formal student, we begin to learn that each moment is always an open gate.

Expect to be Surprised

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, October 21st, 2006

The weather has cooled as autumn winds shake leaves from the trees, twirling above and then settling upon the cold water of the monastery ponds. The koi and goldfish have been moved to an indoor pond built by the shissui and, revived by the warmth and light of their new environment, play tag and other fishly games, identifying each other through colour, shape and sound. Students pausing to watch are themselves watched through fish eyes and remembered.

At first appearance of a face looming above the surface of the water, the koi usually dart under the floating plants, but if they recognize the face, will come out from under the tangle of leaves and roots for a closer look. And darting away is good because, of course, there are beings whose

interest in fish is much more about eating them than looking at them. So while the fish may just look calm and peaceful, they are alert and inquisitive and they are ready to flee if need be.

The process of cognition and perception described as the five skandhas is as evident in their behaviour as it is in the behaviour of human beings. Human beings, however, have a much wider range of information to contend with and so the distortion that can occur through misinterpretation or getting stuck at one of the five skandhas can be much greater, sometimes with devastating results for oneself or for others.

The five skandhas of form, reactivity, symbolization, habitual patterning and consciousness describe the process of perception and cognition from the moment a detail is noticed and how it may be interpreted. Initially, in the moment of noticing something, there is just "Oh. Something" (form skandha). Following that there is reactivity: should I run away, hide under a plant or something, can I fuck it or eat it, or can I just ignore it? With symbolization skandha we look for a file match: is this like something I have experienced before? And then with habitual patterning skandha we extend the file match into "Okay, if it is like that other thing I've experienced, how did I behave?" With consciousness skandha the forming of the frame is complete: "Ah, I see. It's friendly, I don't need to run. I've seen this before and this is how I should behave towards it". Or "Oh shit, bad thing, run away!" or "Fight back!" or "Kill it before it kills me!"

The process of cognition and perception described by the five skandhas takes place very, very quickly, and is continuously rising and falling. So while one can see larger examples of it, as is illustrated by the fish, moment after moment, the five skandhas are playing themselves out in how you are experiencing everything you experience. Traditionally it is said that sixty mind-moments take place in the amount of time it takes you to snap your fingers. But these are just the most obvious mind-moments. When you notice a thought, it is well after the fact of it's arising and there were countless processes involved, countless movements of one skandha into the next and into the next and into the next, with many cycles of skandha activity occurring simultaneously as minute details of perception forming and reforming.

Now, it's not that perception and cognition are a bad thing. Obviously they are not. But the five skandhas are a compulsive piling up and bunching of perception and cognition. In fact the Sanskrit word "skandha" means "heap" or "pile". Through practice, they can open into the five wisdoms. But unless they do and until they do, they will just pile up to propagate the three klesas of passion, aggression, and stupidity.

Stupidity klesa is the klesa people indulge in most often because passion and aggression are simply too exhausting to sustain for any length of time and we're too lazy to stay in them for long. Stupidity is much easier. Rather than opening around our reactivity, we will tend to flatten everything out and limit our noticing to the usual, the familiar.

How you have experienced experiencing from the time you got up this morning, so much of it was

familiar, was it not? - The same dreaded interruption of sleep by the alarm clock, the colour of your toothbrush, the smell of soap, struggling with your socks, the familiar routines of leaving your house. And then arriving at the monastery: struggling with your socks, walking through hallways, hearing the familiar sounds of the densho. And then when the sitting started: that same old twinge in your knee as you took your seat; the rituals of tucking and folding and arranging your clothing, scratching your nose as you usually do even though it doesn't itch but might -that you engage in instead of the dignified ceremony and celebration of the forms; the familiar feel of the chanting text in your hand as you picked it up; the sound of the gong, and right now, the familiar sound of my voice. And yet the truth of the matter is that moment to moment, [Katsu!] you never know what is going to happen.

When we block out the details of experiencing, we settle into stupidity klesa. This is an activity that we indulge in; something that we choose to do. And it is not necessary. Ignorance is not necessary; it comes about through flattening everything out, by ignoring the details of experiencing.

In Anzan Hoshin roshi's translation of the "Xinxin Ming" it says,

"It is not good to sicken the mind  
by avoiding the unknown and holding the familiar".

Where are we? And what is really going on here? Gazing at the white wall, is the wall just one colour? Open your eyes and pay attention to what you are seeing. White is not just one colour; it is many, many shades which change as the light in the room changes. As you hear the sound of my words are you also noticing the spaces between and around the words? Are you feeling into the myriad of sensations of the bodymind sitting, and opening to the spaces around the sensations? We tend to notice what we deem to be "good" and what we deem to be "bad" but through avoidance and glazing, screen out what is neutral. We do this with sensations, with the seeing, with hearing, with all of the sense bases. For example, when looking at another person what we "like" about this person or "dislike" about this person will tend to stand out because we will focus on those details, but we don't notice the depth of space between ourselves and the other person, or that the space extends all around them. Unless we are noticing the space in which they arise, what we are seeing is not seen in context and so our perceptions of that person or that situation are skewed.

In the teisho series, "Round and Bright", the Roshi says:

Sitting here within this moment, before us, after us, all around us - we don't know what anything is. And yet, everything seems so familiar to us, so already known that the possibility of actually questioning our assumptions, our beliefs, our convictions, seems strange and unfamiliar.

But what is it that we are saying when we say the word, "familiar"? This word that we use so readily and easily comes from the Latin for, "family" - something that we know well. We all know our mothers, our fathers, our sons, our daughters. But how often do we actually allow ourselves to actually meet them as they are, beyond our stories about who they are in relation to our stories and beyond their stories about themselves? How often do we allow ourselves to simply see them, hear them, touch them? Our familiarity makes us distant and abstract. We interact only with our own projections and the effect that the projections of others have upon us.

But surely we can step past this vagueness, this abstraction and open into actual contact, actual intimacy with these people that we see everyday. Surely that is possible.

There have been moments - seeing the frailty of your aging mother, the web of wrinkles around the eyes that show you not only how much more wrinkled you're going to get, but... something vulnerable, something naked, something stark, something vivid about the reality of these eyes and ears, this nose, elbows.

There have been moments like this. And surely, despite the fact that moment after moment we are breathing in and breathing out, seeing and hearing, sitting, walking, standing and lying down - it is possible for us to be fully present and intimate and present with our own eyes. And there have been such moments. In such moments, what seemed familiar revealed itself as fresh, and vivid and alive.

But I say that it is at that time: when we allow ourselves to come close to our own experience, that then we can understand another meaning to the word "familiar": "Intimacy".

All of the instruction you have received in practice interviews, in daisan, in person or by email, from teisho, Dharma Talks, texts, from demonstrations of forms, from every interaction you have had with Teachers and practice advisors have been about asking you to allow yourself to experience this intimacy of experiencing. When you are asked to align with the timing of a senior leading a bow, or oryoki or the kata or the chants, you are being asked to practise this intimacy of experiencing which is the heart of Zen practice.&nbsp;

A few days before the koi were moved indoors, the Roshi stopped by the pond to see the fish. They know his face well, but on this occasion he was wearing a wide-brimmed hat which they had never seen before, so they darted under the plants and watched him through the leaves. Realizing that they were not recognizing him, he took his hat off, then put it on again and repeated this a few times so that they could get used to the newness of the hat. They very quickly committed the hat to memory and came to the surface of the water to meet him.

The space of experiencing can look like all kinds of things to you and you may have made a habit of hiding for all kinds of reasons, but none of this applies here and now, as we all sit in the Hatto.

So come out from under whatever it is that you hide behind, whether it be your memories or your associations, or that numbing familiarity. As the Roshi often says, "Come out and play."

The fish have their games. We have ours. They are the play of colours, forms, and sounds, the coming and going of moments, the fact that you do not know what any moment that arises will actually be like. Opening with wonder to this wonderful practice and the unknowability of this moment as an object, we can practice and realize "jijiyu-zanmai" the harmony of a joy which enjoys itself if only we let go of our "selves" and the compulsion to cling and avoid, to flatten and fold.

As Eihei Dogen zenji says in the Genjokoan, The Question of Our Lives,

"No matter how far a fish swims, it doesn't come to the end of the ocean. No matter how far a bird flies, it doesn't come to the end of the sky. Since the beginning, fish and birds have always been one with their elements. When there is a great need, a great use appears. When there is a small need, a small use appears. Thus the full use of things is always as it is. Wherever something is, it covers its own ground. If a bird cut itself off from the sky it would die. If a fish cut itself off from water it would die. Also, the life of the sky is the bird itself, the life of the water is the fish. The bird is life, the fish is life. You can expand on these examples if you'd like. Practice, enlightenment, long and short life are examples.

If a bird or fish ever even tried to escape its own element it would be without its own place. Realizing your life as your life you realize the exertion of Awake Awareness. Realizing this, everything you do is actually done as the Way itself."

So, please, come out and play. Instead of falling into the familiarity of your expectations, expect to be surprised, allow yourself to wordlessly wonder with the whole bodymind and the whole moment.

&nbsp;

Flowering Garbage

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei (Presented while training as Shuso)

Zazen-ji, July 13th, 1996

Our lives are the flowering activity of the Lotus Matrix Treasury.

Really. I know this because that is what it's called in the Brahmajala sutra , the text that I am translating with Zen Master Anzan Hoshin. But I also know this because it is what we are all practicing and realizing here in the Zendo at Zazen-ji. The Brahmajala sutra is the source for the Precepts that the monks of the Northern Mountain Order practice and part of the inspiration for the shingi or standards of deportment that allow us to recognize how to live as that. The whole environment of the forms, of zazen, of the ikebana and artwork and Teachings of the Teacher is one in which our lives become opportunities.

Our greatest difficulty in living as the flowering activity of the Lotus Matrix World is that we are convinced that we are less than that. The Lotus Matrix World is a description of what is true but it is not just a story about who we are; it is part of a set of instructions that help us to realize who we are beyond all stories and concepts. But for most of us, all that we seem to be are our thoughts and feelings, our stories and concepts; the stories we tell ourselves and tell each other. And most of our stories are based on a sense of poverty, of problem, of unworthiness. And so instead of living face to face with Reality in all its richness, we stumble over scraps and husks, we wade in garbage.

But even this isn't a problem. Every gardener knows that the worst garbage can make the best compost. From the garbage of our confusion we can learn to grow the flowers of Richness.

Coming face to face with Reality begins with facing the fact that we tend to make ourselves feel like shit; that we rub our noses in whatever seems wrong; that we find unconditioned joy to be uncomfortable.

I would like to tell you a story about this involving Anzan roshi. Bear in mind that what the Sensei does is to free people from their states. In order to tell you a story about the Sensei, I have to tell you about a state I was in which he opened. But the difficulty of conveying anything about it to you is that when we are in a state we become dysfunctional and can't remember anything. Still, I'll try.

Recently, I bought a beautiful pineapple. It was quite large and had a crown of thick, very green leaves. When I unpacked it at the monastery, I decided that it should go in the fridge until it was to be used because the heat and humidity was causing fruit to spoil very quickly. But it just wouldn't fit. It was too large for the shelf. So I proceeded to saw off the crown and left it sitting on the counter.

A few moments later, the Sensei came into the kitchen to make lunch. He saw the cluster of pineapple leaves on the counter and, without the least hesitation, reached for a black bowl. He placed a kenzan in it, arranged the pineapple crown and filled the bowl with water. Turning, he walked directly to a bookcase in the kitchen, on top of which stands a rupa of Kwannon, the bodhisattva of graceful compassion. He set the bowl next to it and we both moved back to see it. It was beautiful. The pineapple crown ikebana looked like an exotic tropical plant. It certainly didn't

look like garbage.&nbsp;

I think that this is a good example of the kind of everyday art we are presented with at Zazen-ji. Another would be the ikebana that have been mounted recently in the Zendo. One was an arrangement that the Sensei called, "the bamboo kami." It was just a bunch of bamboo garden stakes that he cut into different lengths, arranged their lengths in unpredictable ways with each other and bound with raffia. It was beautiful. It wasn't kami or sacred because it represented the god of bamboo. Nor was it that each piece of bamboo was kami. It was the presence of the sacred, present as bamboo. Or, right now, there is an arrangement made from lengths of willow that were pruned from the willow in the garden. They were bent into a curve, allowed to dry, and again wound around with raffia.&nbsp;

It is not just that garbage can be used to grow flowers. The Sensei shows us that garbage can be flowers.

Now I will tell you something about the moment to moment art of the Teacher.

Every morning the monks assemble one hour before the morning formal sitting begins. The Sensei leads us in Ta-kesa no ge , the Verse of the Kesa , and then we do the shinrei or morning bells. Following this, as the shuso, I lead the monks in the Samu no ge , or Verse of Caretaking Practice , and then we prepare the Zendo and the monastery for the sitting. The morning after the Sensei transformed the pineapple crown into an ikebana, I went into the kitchen to get something, just as the Sensei began speaking to one of the monks. The Sensei asked if he had noticed the ikebana (which had been sitting there since the afternoon before in full view). Unfortunately, the monk hadn't. We miss so many moments of dignity and richness if we don't make ourselves available to what is right before us and right here, (as the Sensei would say), as us. I allowed myself the luxury of a moment of pity for the monk. Something like, "Poor benighted fool! Hee hee."&nbsp;

I heard him say, "It's the crown of a pineapple! We cut the top off and put it in water. Do you like it?" The monk responded enthusiastically. Standing behind them, I glowered, although no expression showed on my face.

The Sensei then turned to me and said, smiling, "Shuso, I'd like to see you outside for a few minutes." I followed him out to the garden, where he sat down on a bench. I stood in front of him and he began to ask me what I would like for lunch. As he spoke, I tried to follow what he was saying, but my attention kept turning to a feeling tone and a sense of contraction.

In the middle of a description of a type of soup, the Sensei's face suddenly changed expression. "What?" he asked.

A familiar shock wave moved through my body along with, as nearly as I can approximate it, the thought: "Oh, oh. He's got me and there's nowhere to go." You see, monks don't get away with

anything here; at least, not for very long. With the Sensei, nothing is hidden, no matter how small. He might let us stew in something for a while, but sooner or later we find ourselves standing in front of him, being asked to take responsibility for how we are, to open up around it.&nbsp;

I said, "Oh, well... I just got caught in some stuff." Now, with the Sensei, this kind of dishonesty is tantamount to a full-blown lie. I was still caught in the state even though I was able to recognize that I could just drop it. We just can't hedge. He can see exactly what we're doing and this is only slightly less dishonest than saying, "Nothing, Sensei," and grinning or acting cute. Once asked, any attempt to re-arrange the landscape to try to hide, to make it look like nothing or to make it look like something other than it is, is absolutely futile, because he comes right in after us. Which is precisely what he did.

His face completely changed and it was nothing short of terrifying. He said, "What are you doing?" I knew exactly what he was talking about. I also knew that I had about three seconds to admit it.

"Oh, I had some poverty stuff come up this morning...um...(hedge, hedge) about the pineapple top."

"What about the pineapple top?" Admitting to being poverty stricken was a start, but I still wasn't coming out from behind my conviction about the contraction.

I whined, "You never say that I do anything, that I had anything to do with things that are done." Now this is garbage and had nothing to do with anything that actually happens in my real life but at that moment I was stubbornly determined to be that garbage.

The moment I admitted to what was actually going on, the Sensei's face changed again. It was no longer terrifying. First he laughed, and then said, "So you wanted me to say that you cut the top off the pineapple? But then I would have to talk about the person who put it on the shelf in the store, the people who brought it there and the person who grew it. I would have to talk about the size of the sun, the mass of the earth, the relative distance between the sun and the earth, the whole history of the universe up until the point that I am speaking right now. Everything is intimately involved. Each thing makes everything else what each thing is, intimately. Everything is done by everything and everyone. For the sake of convenience we can say, 'I' or 'you' but there is no one being spoken about."

As he was speaking he was showing me the Total Field of Richness and I could see for a moment from the point of view of the Lotus Matrix, if not from that of Awareness itself. But it was too big for me to be me. In the next moment, a cascade of fragmented thoughts arose and I stood there, desperately looking for something to grasp onto, some form of escape.

Watching this, he stopped in mid-sentence and said , "Now what?"&nbsp;

"Oh, I had just better go and finish my samu."

He said, "You know that we're not finished until you're finished with doing this to yourself. After everything I've just been saying to you about this, you're still holding on to this feeling tone. You just don't want to let go of it, do you? By doing that, you're taking what I just taught you and you're throwing it in the garbage. You can't do samu with this going on because then it's not samu."

Another shock wave passed through me as I realized what I was doing. But this time I gave it up.&nbsp;

He smiled and bowed me out.

Just as grace, dignity, and art is an everyday bread and butter (or rice and tea) matter at Zazen-ji, living past roles and social identities is simply how things are here. For example, gender distinction is something that is seldom discussed at Zazen-ji. It just isn't an issue for the most part because the shingi, or rules of monastic deportment as taught by the Sensei really make any discussion unnecessary. The shingi transform our garbage into flowers and situations will tend to look after themselves because as we follow the shingi, the alignment that they create corrects deviations of any type that come up. It is only when we step outside of the shingi that things become complicated.

I have another little story about garbage to show you what I mean.

Earlier this year, we were invited to a Vietnamese Buddhist temple to visit with other monks and share a meal that the abbot, Thich Bon Dat, wanted to offer to the Sensei. In the gathering of 8 monks, two were female, 6 male. Towards the end of the visit, we gathered in an office to share tea, fruit and some sweets.&nbsp;

I helped to pour the tea and passed it to junior monks sitting to my right. Although I am a female monk, the fact that I poured the tea had nothing to do with gender. I happened to be seated closest to the tea pot and it was simpler for me to pour the tea and pass the bowls of fruit and sweets to the other monks. The monk to my right took a piece of fruit, and a sweet. I noticed in my peripheral vision that he did not know what to do with either the pit or the wrapper and so kept it in his hand.&nbsp;

When we were finished the tea, we stood to say good-bye. The monk to my right stood with his hand hanging awkwardly to his side, clenching his little store of garbage. I reached across the table, pulled a kleenex from a box, turned and handed it to him. I didn't do that because I was a female acting out a mothering role for the poor messy male who's much too important to know how to take care of himself as I used to feel compelled to do. I did it because, as his senior, I was responsible for him and I knew what he needed to do and he didn't.

He nodded in appreciation, and, laying the kleenex across his left hand, placed his garbage in the centre and then very carefully folded it into a small bundle. Then he handed this neat little package of garbage to me. I looked at it, and then I looked at him, and then I handed it back.&nbsp;

We looked at each other and both of our faces simultaneously blossomed with smiles.

Have a good morning.

Formless Forms: Embodying Awake Awareness

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, July 10, 2004

Very often, beginning students think that Zen practice is zazen. That's it, just sitting and nothing else matters. Zazen is the heart of Zen practice, but of course, we cannot sit 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. At some point we have to get up to walk to the kitchen and make a sandwich, go to the washroom, sleep, have a shower, clean up after ourselves and perhaps take care of other people. In the context of Zen practice, we speak of "forms" or "kata" and "standards of deportment" or the "Shingi" as the ways in which we sit, stand, walk, eat, chant, bow, and as well, how we as students interact with one another and interact with Teachers and the Dharma.

Our practice is the practice of the Buddha. What did the Buddha do? Well, of course, the most important thing he did was sit. He sat and he Woke Up. But after that, what did he do? He stood up; walked; sat down; ate, drank; he spoke to people. He didn't really want to Teach at first, but people implored him to Teach and so he did. Now that's interesting in itself because apparently without him saying much they were able to see that there was something different about him. And since he wasn't Teaching at that point, does it not make sense that the reason they recognized that there was something different about him was because of the ways in which he stood up, sat down, walked, and spoke?

The Buddha was the embodiment of Awake Awareness and his deportment was a continuous expression of his realization. This was very noticeable and others found themselves following his example. At first it may not have been all that clear to them as to why they felt it important to do as he did, but over time they realized that this alignment with their Teacher was in fact very, very important because he was communicating something in every gesture, every movement. And so it became a practice in itself to move as he moved, to take their seats as he did, to hold their bowls as he did, to speak with one another as he did, to align themselves with his movements. It became one of the ways in which Transmission from Teacher to student occurred.

But times have changed. We are not wandering about in the forests of India as the Buddha was. If the forms were merely a set of unbreakable rules and we had to do absolutely everything in exactly the same way that the Buddha did, monastics would most likely be knocking on your doors, begging for their one meal of the day. Well, no, we wouldn't. We would freeze to death. It's bloody cold here. And in China when the monks went on begging rounds they were regarded as no good moochers. So the forms and shingi were adapted.

The forms can be adapted to the times and circumstances in which we find ourselves. But this does not mean that we are just "making stuff up" as we go along. There is a set of guidelines in place called the "Shingi" and these guidelines are the rules of deportment for monastics. Our own rules of deportment are recorded in a text entitled "The Saijo Shingi: the Department of Radiance: The monastic Precepts of the Northern Mountain Order" which contains the rules of deportment specific to the monastics of our Lineage. These shingi are founded upon our environment and situation as a whole and so are open to change and growth and also to learning from the shingi, Vinaya, and rules of other Buddhist orders.

The shingi are rooted in the Teachings of our Founding Masters, Masters Eihei Dogen Kigen daiosho and Keizan Jokin daiosho and specifically in the Hakukaze shingi as taught by Joshu Dainen daiosho. The great Master Dengyo Daishi or Saicho, the Founding Master of the Tendai school, originated the use of the Precepts which were Transmitted through Dogen zenji's Soto Lineage. Primary historical sources are the Eihei Gen Shingi and the various chapters on monastic practice in the Shobogenzo, the Brahmajala sutra, the chapters on the bodhisattva's conduct in the Avatamsaka sutra and so on. These shingi are based upon the all-embracing mind of bodaishin and are our bodying forth of the Way, the embodiment of our vows, the heart of compassion and wisdom right now.

So, as you can see, when I am speaking with you in the hallway about how you are doing gassho monjin, I am not just making this stuff up. The forms practised by associate and general students are based on these same centuries-old rules of deportment for monastics though they have been simplified for beginning students.

When we are first beginning our practice, the forms can seem like an endless array of "rules": stand this way, sit this way, don't put your hands in your pockets; straighten up; don't stick your backside out when you do gassho monjin; tuck your thumbs in when you do shashu; when to bow, when not to bow; don't rub your nose in the middle of the chants; put your feet together before you turn a corner in kinhin; And on and on and on. Most beginning students experience a period of confusion over all of this and sometimes some frustration because, of course, self-image always wants to feel that it knows how to do things before it actually knows how to do them. And so it hates being corrected. The only reasonable response to that kind of reactivity, of course, is to simply practice and let the process of learning unfold.

There are countless misunderstandings that can come up about forms, and so a lot of time and energy is spent in demonstrating, explaining and reviewing students' use of them. This morning I thought I would talk a little about some of these misunderstandings. But first of all we need to look into what distinguishes a Zen "form" from any other "form".

The word "form" comes from the Latin "forma" and refers to the shape and structure of something as distinguished from its material. The "form" of an activity stands out in contradistinction to the activity. For example, if someone were showing another person a "form" associated with golf, it might involve instructing them to hold the club just so; stand with the shoulders at a certain angle, feet placed apart and so forth. Good "form" makes for a good game of golf and the details that make up good "form" can be spoken about in a way that makes them clearly and distinctly stand out from other details that could be noticed; highlighting what is really relevant.

Over time and with a lot of practice one might become very, very good at golf and perhaps aspects of being a good golfer could carry over into other activities, but there would be limitations to the usefulness of these skills. It would, for instance, be more effective if someone also looked into how one should take the club out of the bag; or how to walk while holding a club. But in golf there isn't much concern about that sort of thing as in the end the whole point of doing it is to get a ball into a hole to win the game. Whatever "training" there is involved in golf is really about achieving that end result - the ball in the hole. That is its purpose and that focus will determine which details should be deemed important and which unimportant.

When learning Zen forms, students often draw parallels between the physical aspects of the forms and other activities they have engaged in. If they have practiced such things as yoga or some form of martial arts or have a background in military training, associations about those things will often come up and these associations need to be recognized and released. This is important because if we allow them to condition our use of the forms, they will prevent us from understanding what our use of the forms can show us. The only thing that Zen practice has in common with any other activity we may have engaged in is that we have some experience of both of them and perhaps experience the same self-consciousness when we do them.

What the forms of Zen practice are about, what their purpose is, is quite different from anything else that we do. It is very difficult to talk about them without my being able to demonstrate them and for us to see one another, but to illustrate some of their uses I will draw upon an example that involves alignment.

If we are sitting on a stool in a hallway and see a senior monastic coming towards us, (a practice advisor, a Dharma Teacher or the Teacher) we should stand up and turn to face the monastic. When beginning students are told this, it will sometimes evoke some reactivity, something along the lines of "But I am resting, so why should I have to stand up just because you are coming down the hall?" Well, the reason you should stand up is because you should make yourself available to the situation. You need to be alert and ready to respond. You may be asked to do something or it

may be that you should not be there at all. Whether that is the case or not, you should be ready to respond and the best way to do that is to be in a standing position as you can't do anything while sitting on a stool.

Why should you turn towards the monastic? Because this is one of the ways in which you can make yourself available for interaction, should that be needed. There may be a verbal exchange or a gesture of some sort, if only to indicate that you need not do anything. It is simpler and easier for both of you to communicate verbally or non-verbally if you are facing one another. In addition, this is something that you can apply to other situations you find yourself in. If you go to a meeting at work, for example, and walk into a room full of people, most of whom you don't know, what would be most effective is to find out who in the room knows what is going on and keep an eye on them. Regardless of what others think is going on, the one who is in authority is the one who is "calling the shots", so it only makes sense to take cues from them.

When encountering a senior monastic, there will often be a bow and the junior student should always let the senior lead. I mention this because sometimes students will begin a bow when they think it appropriate instead of waiting for the monastic to lead the bow. It may be, for instance, that there is someone else approaching you that you can't see but the monastic can and is waiting until everyone is gathered to begin the bow. Or it may be that he or she is simply waiting for you to let go of whatever agendas you might have, to make yourself fully available to this moment and this interaction, before beginning the bow.

Your timing should be in alignment with that of the senior through the beginning, middle and end of the bow. Your movements need to follow the movements of the monastic. There is always a slight delay as a small amount of time is needed to process visual information and respond, but the difference in timing between the movements of the senior and your own should be so slight as to be almost imperceptible. And this too, can evoke some reactivity for students who are just beginning to learn the forms.

Alignment is not a matter of imitating or mimicking or mirroring the movements of a senior as in "monkey see, monkey do". There is much more to it than that. You can imitate or mirror what someone is doing very easily by focusing attention and copying their movements. Aligning with them is a different matter.

It is not possible to align with what someone is doing by focusing attention. It requires that you practice with open attention so that you can see more of the details of their movements; so that you can see the whole of their movements in context. It requires a more open, subtler, more flexible attention to do this well.

As our understanding of the forms deepens, this practice of alignment becomes more and more important. What we begin to discover is that alignment begins to show us something about how to actually feel into the forms and beyond that, feel into how another person is experiencing. This is what the early students of the Buddha discovered when they aligned with his movements. There is

something that is communicated and what it is that is being communicated by Teachers is the practice of recognition. The ability to feel into other people's movements also carries over into many, many things that we need to do in everyday life. I will give you a couple of examples of the practical applications of this:

To take a very simple example, that of driving: if you are focusing on the car in front of you, perhaps identifying with the feeling of being in a hurry and that is conditioning how you are driving, you may find yourself in a situation where the car in front of you seems to suddenly make a right turn without using turn signals and you almost rear-end them. Anyone who has driven for any length of time will likely have had that experience. However, if you are practicing with open attention what you will find is that it is often possible to notice more detail about how other people are driving. When attention is more open, there is more of a perception of the spaciousness of each moment and details stand out more clearly and distinctly. There are all kinds of subtle indications that someone is about to turn that you might not ordinarily notice, but they may stand out if attention is quite open and this, of course, is very useful.

Another example is that of being in a room with other people. If attention is open, it is possible to feel into the movements of other people in the same way that you practice feeling into the movements of a senior monastic. But in this instance, you are not moving with them, but are just observing them. Simply through observing and feeling into their movements, you can know more of how they are. If someone is angry, or laughing hysterically, or behaving in some way that mystifies you, you can feel into how they are and this can help you to understand more about the situation. Where you might ordinarily just react to someone who is acting out a state, you can not only see very clearly that it is simply a state, but you can know something of how that person is experiencing that state and how to respond to them. Perhaps you will say something; perhaps not. But in either case your response can be more accurate than it would be if attention were narrowed.

I could go on and on with different examples of this sort, but as important as these can be, they don't begin to touch on the depth and breadth of the forms.

The forms are not only practical, they are very intelligent. As Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi has said, "Our lives are not hidden from us; our lives are an open secret". Our practice of zazen and of the forms in sitting, standing, and walking reveal our lives to us. They align us with the inherent wisdom of bodymind by gently but continuously insisting that body and mind be in the same place, at the same time. Every form shows us how our attention is moving in this moment. They present the opportunity to practice opening past the constraints of association and habit, so that we can see, hear, feel, and know what is taking place in this moment directly and without interpretation.

The forms need to be practiced with the whole bodymind to really make use of them. When lifting your hands to gassho, it is not enough to just be concerned about where your hands are.

You also need to feel the breath, as the bow should be coordinated with the breath, exhaling as we bow forward, inhaling as we straighten. But in addition to feeling the breath we need to open attention to all of the sensations of the body from the soles of our feet to the top of our head, front

of the body as well as the back. We need to know where all of our "bits" are, relative to each other and relative to everything around them to move well and to sit well.

When we bow with the whole bodymind, when attention is that open, then there is no "one" who is doing the bow. There is no sense of there being an "I" or a "me" who is at the centre of "my" experience doing the experiencing. Without any sense of struggle, without any sense of "trying to get it right" the bodymind bows into the space in which it arises and which it arises as.

The shingi or "standards of deportment" practiced by monastics are very detailed and nuanced. As Roshi has written in the Saijo Shingi:

Shingi are the ways in which we can embody the Way of the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors as this very bodymind. These are the most intimate and precious of teachings because they are the means by which we may receive and offer the transmission of the mind of the Lineage. Through these rules of deportment we practice and realize our lives as the lives of all beings throughout all directions and all times and that all are just this life and that this life is free of Birth and Death.

There are even forms and chants for such activities as shaving and bathing. My grandfather in Dharma, Joshu Dainen zenji, composed a single verse that could be used in all of those situations. And in fact what it says is true of all situations and events or "dharmas". It says,

Joshu Dainen's Verse

Attention, attention.

All is always stainless,

each form is always formless.

Aligning ourselves with the Way,

each dharma is always Buddhadharmas.

So what distinguishes a Zen form from any other form, from the forms used in yoga or martial arts or dance or any other activity? What distinguishes a Zen form from the "forms" of other activities is its purpose. The practice is not at all concerned about making you fit and trim or successful. It doesn't care if you are young and supple or old and infirm. It doesn't care if you have "ninja moves" can sing in key, or that you can hit a hole in one.

To quote from Roshi's translation of Dogen zenji's text, the "Fukanzazengi":

May I point out the one from Jetavana, the Buddha, who was himself Primordial Awareness and still sat for six years? And how about Bodhidharma transmitting the seal of Awareness through doing wall-gazing at Shaolin temple for nine years? The echo of those are heard even now. If this is how it was with the great ones and their diligence, then how about you in your own practice? You should stop chasing understanding through juggling words, allow the external seeking of your

mind to collapse upon itself and light up your own nature. Doing this, the bodymind will drop through itself spontaneously revealing your Original Nature. If you wish to be realized in Suchness, immediately practice Suchness.

So what is their purpose? To show you how to immediately practice Suchness. If you do the forms thoroughly and completely, what they will show you is that there is no "you" and never has been. That "thing" that you think of as "you" dissolves into the open space of Awareness, as that which is this Space and all spaces and is the emptiness and vividness of all "things".

Mondo

[Sensei]: So now what we are going to do is begin a mondo, which is a period during which we can discuss points that you would like to bring up about the forms. You can ask questions and so forth. One thing I will mention, though, is that there is a tendency to stray considerably during these discussions. They tend to go all over the place. If we start to stray into, let's say, something that is really more of a historical nature and not really directly relevant to our discussion of the forms as such, then what I will do is I will just simply say, "I'll send you an email about that if you send me one asking the question". Rather than explaining that each time, if I say, "I'll send you an email about that" or "You can send me an email about that", it doesn't mean that I'm dismissing your question. It's just that we have just a certain amount of time and we want to stay within the kind of framework that has to do with our actual practise of the forms. We can also, if need be, go into some demonstrations and so forth, if there are points about the forms that you are not clear about.

So, does anyone have any questions about anything at all?

Student: Can we shut off the air conditioner because I can't hear?

[Sensei]: Yes.

[Sensei]: Can you hear me now, Valerie? [Laughter] It is a long way away to the other end of the room.

So what I was saying was that we can have a discussion about various aspects of the forms. If there are specific forms that you would like to know more about or would like a demonstration of, we can do that.

So, does anyone have any questions?

[Student]: Greetings between students, like walking through hallways in the monastery?

[Sensei] Well, in the context of the environment of practice, where we are really just gathered to do our practice, "hi-ya" really just doesn't work [laughter].

There will be a strong impulse to do that because, of course, we are very strongly programmed to do that. But it has nothing to do with our use of the forms and this is where the forms can sometimes get very blurry. People will often launch into a bow in place of "Hi-ya", "How ya doin?" "Nice to see you" and so forth. And that's not what they are. A bow is only done in acknowledgment of our being in the environment of practice. They are about opening our attention to the space of experiencing, to the space in which we arise and which we each arise as.

Social interactions have no place in that at all because it is not a social gathering. Does that answer your question?

[Student]: As in this morning, while everyone's gathering and we are all entering here, do we ignore each other or bow?

[Sensei]: It's not a matter of ignoring each other. There are some areas of the monastery where a bow is appropriate, for instance when entering and leaving certain areas. Sometimes if there are a lot of people moving through a hallway or something of that nature, it really is best for everybody to just move through the hallway and go where they are going, rather than everybody stopping and getting into a lot of "bobbing up and down". Roshi really doesn't like that kind of thing. He would much rather we keep things very simple, very straightforward.

Some of the areas of the monastery don't really work that well for us because there is, for example, downstairs, there are all of these doorways converging on one hallway. So that makes it very difficult for people to determine when it is appropriate to bow and when it isn't. In that instance what you often see monastics doing is just walking through - don't stop, just keep going, because otherwise you would be standing there for ten minutes bobbing up and down because there is an endless stream of people.

So in terms of just functionality, we need to look at what area are we talking about. If it tends to get very congested very easily, then most likely it would be more appropriate just to move through it as quickly as possible. Don't linger in doorways, don't linger in the Cloak Room for example, because there isn't enough space. And again, you have the staircase opening out onto that area, a doorway, a lot of people walking back and forth. It is not a good place to have a conversation, for example.

It's person, place, time and amount. It depends on what is going on. But in general we don't want to create more complexity than is needed.

Does that answer your question?

[Student]: Yes.

[Sensei]: Other than going on a tour of the building, I don't think I can be much more specific than

that.

Is there anything you would like to add to that, Angya?

[Chunen angya]: No.

[Sensei]: Any other questions?

[Student]: Can I have a demonstration of the Great Bows?

[Sensei]: That's a good question. So, I think for that, I think...Mishin godo, would you please demonstrate a Great Bow. You can talk about it as you are doing it, explain some of the details.

[Mishin godo]: Yes.

[Sensei]: I asked Mishin godo to do this because I do an adaptation of a Great Bow. I have one knee that won't let me do the forms as fully as she is able to do them so I would rather have her demonstrate them rather than do the demonstration myself.

This is an example of how the forms can be adapted. It doesn't matter if someone has some kind of physical problem; the forms can always be adapted to be used. But of course if you are able to work with certain details, as she will - the ways of pushing up from a bow and so forth, then if you can do that please do it. If you can't you can let one of us know and we will show you how to adapt the form so that you can stay in time.

[Mishin godo]: Should I stand at the back of the room?

[Sensei]: Yes, and behind Roshi's zabuton and you can face either way. Most of the people who are concerned are at that end of the room.

[Mishin godo]: Is it useful if I do it this way, so that....

[Sensei]: Maybe just do it from different directions so that everybody can see.

[Mishin godo]: Well I will try it this way first.

[Sensei]: Stand nearer Sensei's seat and go that way.

[Mishin godo]: So the hands come to gassho, a fist-distance from the end of the nose, level with the tip of the nose. Right knee, left knee, right elbow, left elbow; the hands. And there is a triangle-shape like there is in the kata, but they are not touching, Sensei, are they?

[Sensei]: No.

[Mishin godo] Did you want me to narrate through this?

[Sensei]: Sure.

[Mishin godo]: So the forehead goes on the ground and the palms lift up and they should remain fairly parallel to the ceiling. And then left hand, right hand; left elbow, right elbow. And then there is a moment here when it is really helpful to feel the body kneeling but straight. And this will really help, I've found, if you have trouble standing up after gassho monjin, to not to try to launch into getting up when you are still coming up from the floor.

Then left knee, right knee. And again, with as straight a posture as you can. Feet come together and hands are still a fist-distance from the tip of the nose. And then bow. And then you do it again two more times if we are doing it again if we are doing three Great Bows at the start of a sitting round. And then the hands part at the end and as always, this is what Jinmyo sensei calls "An invitation to open to peripheral vision" which I think is really helpful - a reminder that is not just like that, but actually opening to the space and then the hands coming back to shashu. Or, it depends on if you are standing at the doorway or this Great Bow is at the start of the sitting round.

Was that helpful?

[Student]: Yes. Can you turn so I can see where your feet are?

[Mishin godo]: Sure. So I can turn and face this way?

So my feet are touching with the left toe over the right toe and my knees are apart a little bit. They are not like this.

[Sensei]: There is breathing, as well, that goes along with the bow. There are many, many details to this that one learns as our practice deepens. We won't work, necessarily, with all of those all at once right at the beginning of things. The main thing to begin with that you need to be concerned about is getting down and getting up on time. So you need to align with whoever is leading the bowing round: down at the same time as they are and up.

There is a tendency for people to use the floor to push themselves up. Could you demonstrate how that will tend to come up.

[Mishin godo demonstrates]

[Sensei]: So this is the wrong way to do it.

[Much laughter]

[Mishin godo]: That's part of why. Because when you are doing that, then "Whoaa..... (inaudible)

[Much laughter]

[Mishin godo]: If we are using the form then we can see the room, although I know where the floor is. And then I guess the "getting up" is sort of like that.

[Sensei]: Yes, very ungainly way of getting up.

So that is to be avoided. The hands are on the floor, palm-down. Then you turn them so that the wrists are on the floor. Lift up towards the ceiling. Then they just come together on the way up. So you don't actually use the floor to push yourself up.

[Student]: I've noticed that when do forms they are never arbitrary in that each part of the form actually has a purpose. I was wondering, in the Great Bow, does the raising of the hands have a purpose?

[Sensei]: Well, when you are doing a Great Bow you are using the whole bodymind in the bow. That is the point of crossing the toes at the back, because you need to be aware of everything in the bow. Traditionally, the gesture of lifting the hands represented lifting the Buddha's feet above one's head, which was a common gesture of respect in ancient India. Lifting the hands up to the ceiling is a kind of a gesture of offering or opening, noticing the peripheral vision... and I'm not sure what else to say about it other than that.

[To Mishin godo] Has Roshi said anything to you about that specifically?

[Mishin godo]: No.

[Sensei]: This is how I have always understood it.

[Student]: Doesn't it have direction towards the Buddha, you're sort of...

[Sensei]: Well, in our practice we tend not to do a whole lot of thinking about the Buddha, especially when we are doing forms. It's more about feeling the body and using the forms as a way to open attention to where we are and what is going on. Because the fact of the matter is that [gesturing towards the student] there is the Buddha dressed up as you! So there is no point in thinking about "something" or "someone" else while doing the form because that will only make you abstracted. You're not being attentive to what is actually going on. You're kind of removing yourself from the situation to think about something that is very nebulous; it's a set of ideas or perhaps a feeling tone. So this is more a matter of...if you feel it as you are doing it, as you feel yourself lifting the hands, you don't need a lot of explanation about what that means or why you are doing it. The form itself shows you what the doing of it is.

Now, there is a legend that goes that when the Buddha Woke Up - he sat on a pile of kusha grass

and he Woke Up and then he walked over to these people that knew him. Except that they realized that something very definitely had changed and they didn't know how to greet him in the usual way. It didn't feel appropriate to go "Aye! How ya doin?" Or anything remotely like that. They knew there was something about him that had changed so much that he was not the person that they knew before. And they could feel this really strongly. He emanated Dharma. And so it was a kind of spontaneous hands to gesture to bring the hands together and bow.

Maybe that's true and maybe it's not. There's something I don't like about that explanation so much because it does veer into a kind of feeling tone or could be misconstrued as a feeling tone. Gassho monjin, especially the way that we practice it, is truly about just opening attention to the details of experiencing. If you are doing that, really doing that, you don't need to think about anything else [laughter] because you are doing everything humanly possible to open to experiencing and then everything else takes care of itself.

Does that make sense to you? Does it answer your question?

[Student]: yes.

[Sensei]: Any other questions?

[Student]: Just with the Great Bows - right elbow, left elbow - do you go vice-a-versa on the way up?

[Sensei]: Mishin godo?

[Mishin godo]: I think so.

[Sensei]: Why don't you do it because in the doing of it...there are a lot of things like this, when a question is asked about a sequence of movements and you are trying to remember something out of context without actually doing it, it is quite difficult. So it would probably be easier for you to actually do it.

[Mishin godo demonstrates and says "Yes"]

[Sensei]: Okay. Verified through experience - always the best way to go about things.

[Mishin godo]: Would you like me to sit down, Sensei, or stay here?

[Sensei]: You might as well stay there because something else might come up.

[Student]: Do you have anything to say about the use of mala?

[Sensei]: Use of mala? That's something that we go over privately with each student, as to how we actually practise with it. But in general practising with a mala is a way, you could say, of extending one's mindfulness. Usually you sit with your hands still, in the mudra, and you practice the mudra - the details of it. When you are using a mala you are still practising in the same way that you were previously, but you are feeling the movement of the bead together with the breath. There is this little tiny bit of activity going on at the same time that you are doing your sitting practice. So it is a way of extending your practice.

Sometimes people think that the only time they should use a mala is if they are in deep trouble.

[Much laughter]

Falling asleep or feeling overcome by a state or something of this nature, so they are going to "mala their way out of it".

[Much laughter]

That's actually not useful.

Most of the time when I use a mala, I use a mala because they're fun! I enjoy them. It's not because there is some kind of sense of problem going on. In fact, if there were something going on that I was having to really work with, I would probably be sitting with my hands in the mudra because if there is any kind of - how to say it - strategy about anything that you are doing in your practice, that only adds to the difficulty. So the first thing that you need to do is let go of all of the strategies.

So using a mala becomes a way of extending your mindfulness into a small amount of movement. As your practice deepens, particularly if one is practising as a monastic, there are many other ways that we use malas. I am just referring right now to the way that associate and general students would use a mala. And this is why, to give you an example of this, when an associate or a general student is using a mala, they sit with the free hand resting palm-down on the knee. A monastic, you will almost always sitting with the hand upturned. But that is because this is associated - it is actually a mudra associated with another practice that they do. So they are actually doing a whole other practice at the same time that they are doing mindfulness practice and that is the reason for the difference.

There is a set of instructions that I wrote out some time ago that were published in the eMirror. If anyone wants a copy of that they are welcome to send me an email as a reminder and I will send you the article. It just contains basic information: how to use it, how to care for it, what to do when you are using a mala and you come to the tassel - which is that you should flip it around and go in the opposite direction. The big bead at the top with the tassel is called the "head bead" or the "Teacher bead" so when you are using a mala there are all these little details you need to know.

You are going in a circle, right, so you come up to the tassel and the head bead; you don't just run over it. At that point you flip it around and go in the opposite direction. So it is good to know all of these little details before you actually start using one because there is a reason for them all as well.

Any other questions?

[Student]: Sensei, would you review what we do when we are on retreat and there is one or more people in the Hatto getting a meal and coming back in. What form should we follow before going to our seat?

[Sensei]: Okay. Well, you would most likely both be sitting on that side of the room and you end your sitting round when you hear the bell. You get up and the senior leads, whichever of you has been practising longer is leading the forms, basically. So you walk around the back of the Butsudan. Never cross between the Hoza, the Teacher's seat and the Butsudan, but circle around the back of it to the back door. The second person, the junior of the two, would need to just stand back and away from the door to make space for the first person to open the door, do a bow, retrieve their tray, do a bow holding the tray as they come back into the room. Then the second person can go out and do the same thing and then you just follow each other around the room.

Does that answer your question?

[Student]: Yes.

[Sensei]: Chiso anagarika?

[Student]: I would like to know if there is something inherent in the forms which helps practice because I feel like if I put my hands like this or like this and if I am mindful of the process, why it makes a difference if they are not aligned perfectly. For instance if I do a Great Bow and my hands are like this but I am mindful of that, it is still not good to be mindful of it. Is something within the posture itself that requires...

[Sensei]: In some ways that can be true, but in other ways it can be really misunderstood. And so it is a little tricky because it is something that we really need to look at almost form by form; how each person is doing the forms and why they are doing what they are doing. Very often there is a lot of blurriness that comes up in people's use of forms. So as I mentioned in my Dharma Talk, when bowing we need to bow with the whole bodymind. So when you bring your hands to gassho, it is not enough to just to feel your hands. You need to feel with the whole bodymind. If you are not you are broadcasting something that is very blurry and that happens all the time. How people's attention is arranged as they are doing that can really vary. With that form that you mentioned, that or any other form, there can be ways of moving that are very difficult for some people because there may have been some injury or something of that nature. So that needs to be looked into. But

then once that is determined, if there is some adaptation of the form that is fine. If not, then you work with the details as they are.

There is nothing "magical" in any of the ways of arranging the body in the forms. It depends on how you make use of them. The mudra can be incredibly useful if people know how to make use of it. If they don't, they could sit like this with a perfect mudra and it would be absolutely useless to them because they would be mimicking an arrangement without really understanding what it's for. So there is a lot to look at. There is no one answer to that.

This is why we tend to do a lot of forms review in daisan and practice interviews and so forth, looking at how each person is making use of the mudra, the bows, how they understand kinhin, what they are misunderstanding and so on.

Mishin godo, is there anything you wanted to say about that?

[Sensei]: Any other questions?

[Student]: I found that forms are very useful but they are almost reserved for the monastery but when we get out, especially I have two children, it is very easy to get caught into what other people want us to - or how other people interact and it is easy to let go and lost attention. And you can't use forms because it freaks people out.

[Much laughter]

[Sensei]: Yes, indeed.

[Student]: I was wondering if you had anything to say on it, if there is a way to approach this using forms that are a bit more subtle or...

[Sensei]: Well, you know there is the form itself of say, walking with your hands in shashu during kinhin or doing a Great Bow or doing gassho monjin in a doorway and so forth. Then there are other things that you learn through doing the forms. For example, there is an example that I used recently. I was talking this morning about aligning with a student. Now, let's say there is a group of people downstairs and they are all "yakkety-yakkety-yak" after a sitting and a monastic walks through. There will a very strong tendency for them to not notice that anyone else is there. But maybe one or two people might notice and so then they will almost intuitively know that they should stop, that they should just come to a complete stop. Other people might still continue to "yakkety-yak" but this one or two people will just know that this is not appropriate. That is incredibly useful because to be able to recognize what is going on, what is appropriate and what is not appropriate in any given situation and be able to take responsibility for that requires a bit of practice but is also very useful in other situations. You might find yourself, let's say, with a group of friends and they are all caught up in their stuff and "Yakkety-yakkety-yak" and all of a sudden you

don't just think, you know that this is not appropriate and what you can do is you can stop. You don't have to freeze and put your hands in shashu in order to stop. But you are making use of what is essential, what the form was conveying to you in the first place without using the outer form of it at all.

When you are walking you can do a speeded-up version of kinhin without putting your hands in shashu or doing anything that is going to draw attention to you at all. In fact, particularly for beginning students, associate and general students, we would much rather that people not do anything that makes them stand out. This is ordinary man on the street kind of stuff. So this is why beginning students generally don't wear kunsu and jubon and so forth. This is why we don't have everybody dressed up in robes and what-not. We are very careful about not doing that sort of thing, as it helps you to integrate your understanding of practice into other situations that you find yourself in.

I used to use the traffic lights as kaishaku: standing on the street with my hands in my pockets and that was the kaishaku. And when the light changed green I would step out with the left foot.

[Laughter]

[Sensei]: Nobody knew what I was doing. I did kinhin all over Ottawa .

So there are small ways that you can do it and not be particularly obtrusive about it.

Other questions?

[Student]: To review the mudra - hands during sitting.

[Sensei]: How about, Godo, if you sit a little further back from Sensei's seat, scoot backwards just a bit. I will pull my zabuton forward and I will talk about this and Godo will do what I am doing so you can look either way.

When you put your hands in the mudra, you need to put the right hand on the bottom, left hand on top. The fingers of both hands need to be basically flat. Not arced, but flat. They should be parallel to the ceiling so that they are not angled towards the body like this, or away from the body like that.

If you look down, basically the middle knuckle of the index finger lines up over the middle knuckle of the other index finger. Right where your finger bends, here. Right.

And then the thumbs arc up and form a soft arc. When you look down at your hands the thumbs and the index finger will more or less line up. The thumb will either be over the index finger or slightly over the one next to it, but it is basically over it. Our tendency will sometimes be to let the

thumbs rotate back like that or again, forward. Or just squash it altogether. And all of that is significant.

The reason for taking that arced shape is because if you take one hand and you shake it really, really vigorously, I mean really shake it and then let go, your hand will naturally form that shape. So this is the shape of your hand when it is completely relaxed. This is the shape of your hand when it is tense. So what you need to do is take that posture and keep it like that throughout your sitting. If your thumbs start to go like this [Sensei makes the sound of an airplane crashing], then the reason for that is because there is some sinking, literally, going on. There is a mental state that is forming and it is taking your thumbs with it. So you can use that, the noticing of it, to reinitiate your practice: to realign the mudra, feel the breath, feel the tanden, start your practice over again. It becomes incredibly useful.

So that's one aspect of it. The other thing that may happen is that the thumbs may push up like that. That will often come up when there is a quality of aggression or a sense of struggle that's coming up. In actual fact it is just the tips of the thumbs that touch and it should be very, very light.

So Valerie, your mudra right now needs to be - fingers more in contact and the centre knuckles of the index fingers one over the other. That's it. And then just the tips of the thumbs touching.

The hands should not be allowed to sink down, forward, slide down like this. They should be resting; the wrists rest on the upper thighs so that the hands are supported. The blades of the hands rest against the belly wall. If you let them go, if they start to do this [demonstrates sliding] everything starts to become very, very blurry, very quickly and it will tend to put you to sleep as well.

So, again, all of these forms, every form that you use, is about seeing how your attention is in each and every moment. So this is the mudra as it should be. If it's not like this, if you are doing something different, it is because you are letting something else take over.

So again, if your thumbs start to droop, you need to catch that in the first 1/8 th of an inch because what is happening is that there is some sinking occurring and if you catch it early it is really easy to correct it. If you don't catch it then it will continue and the whole mudra will start to go. If it continues and you still aren't getting it, your hands will start to separate and perhaps the rest of the posture will start to collapse. And if you're still not getting it, well you're really into it now.

[Much laughter]

You could keep going like this until your head hits the floor. And then you'll get it. But at that point, when you are like this [Sensei demonstrates a soggy posture] it's a really long climb back up the hill to get things back on track again. It's much easier if you correct it in the first quarter inch.

I know this to be true.

[Much laughter]

Did that answer your question?

So while we are continuing to talk, Godo, if you could go around and adjust people's mudras if you notice anything. If not, that's fine. Just leave them be.

Other questions?

[Student]: Inaudible

[Sensei]: That's probably something that is best discussed on an individual basis because we would check your posture. Something like how far back you are sitting on the zafu can change many, many things about your posture. So rather than just going too generally into it I think it would be better to do it in person.

The elbows shouldn't be "held out" from the body because that will set up strain. If your hands are here, if they are actually resting on the tops of your thighs and the blades of the hands are resting on the belly wall, then this is defined, this is the ending point (the hands); the starting point is the shoulders. If you've got your posture arranged properly then the weight of the arm just falls from the shoulder and you are not "holding" anything anywhere. The whole skeletal frame is just resting on itself and you are not having to "muscle" your way through the posture.

Other questions?

[Student]: When you have a zafu and it is really uncomfortably large?

[Much laughter]

[Student]: What is the correct way to deal with that? I tend to slide forward and my knees end up over the edge (of the zabuton) because...

[Sensei] So, Saigyō ino, perhaps you could answer that one. The reason I picked on you...

[Laughter]

[Sensei]: Poor Saigyō ino has done much zafu de-stuffing. He goes around and he keeps pulling wads of kapok out of zafu to make them a little bit lower. If you keep getting them and they're way too high, he's the complaint desk because he can do something about it.

Aside from that, if you are attending a sitting and it's the first round and you've got one of those bullet-hard enormous zafu that are really uncomfortable, you're pretty much stuck with it until the end of the first round when kinhin starts. At that point you can swap it. So you just pick up your zafu, head to the back of the room if there are empty seats. If there are empty seats - can't nick somebody else's zafu.

[Laughter]

What you could do is go down to the Zendo and swap it for one there; or I think there are even some in the Undo. And leave the old one there and bring the new one. BUT at the end of the sitting don't forget to go and put it back because chances are that there is somebody else who hates a really small, soft zafu and they're going to be looking for their big bullet-hard zafu which you've left in the basement.

Sometimes before the first round, before everything starts, you can kind of look around and know "Uh oh, I'm the sixth from the front of the room and number six zafu is not going to work for me". So then again, if there are empty seats you can just zoom to the back of the room with your zafu and pick one really quickly that is going to work for you. Other than that the only suggestion I can make is that you sit in seiza if you can, rather than cross-legged. Do what you need to do to make it work.

For years of course, there were no assigned seats, so I have had my fair share of strange and wonderful zafu as well and that is what I used to do.

Does that answer your question?

Other questions?

If you need to move, by the way, you may. This is informal. You don't need to hold the posture if your knees hurt.

[Student]: Just about the bows and the two portraits on the wall. Who are the portraits of on the walls?

[Sensei pointing]: That's Dogen zenji and that's Bodhidharma. And that calligraphy (of Bodhidharma) was done by Roshi. The last bow is done towards the Teacher if he is here or towards the Teacher's seat if he is not because he is the representative of the whole Lineage so we address everybody, you could say.

Does everybody know what all of the objects on the Butsudan are about?

[Student]: I don't know what the stick is for.

[Sensei]: The stick is called a "hansaku" and this is Roshi's hansaku. Traditionally, as you can see, it has a thin end and a thick end. Some of you might have seen film clips of certain monasteries where you have a big burley monk walking around with a stick? Right. That is a form that has lost a lot of details over the years, over centuries in fact. So, just to explain what that's about. If you are sitting for a long period of time, say a week, an O-sesshin or something like that, if you are sitting for many, many hours a day what can happen is that you can get some tension in your shoulders. And when that really builds up it can become quite painful.

[We should definitely not be leaning against the wall - to a student]

[Student]: I was just stretching my back.

[Sensei]: Okay.

So, some tension can build up in the shoulders and that becomes painful. Now, if someone knows how to use one these things properly, they'll say something like, "If anyone wants to receive the hansaku, please bring your hands to gassho." So then you would be facing the wall and bring your hands up like this and bow forward, then remain like that. And the Teacher walks behind you and strikes three times on one shoulder, three strikes on the other shoulder. It's not quite on the shoulder, it's below, on the surface of the shoulder blade. The reason for doing that is because there are ligaments that run through here and where the ligaments attach to the bone, if those are struck in exactly the right place, and this is key, it has to be done properly and with exactly the right amount of force, the ligament will release and so you have this almost immediate experience of relief from pain. So this form involving the stick is actually about relieving pain. It is not about inflicting pain and it is not about beating people into Wakefulness. So, for that reason you don't actually see people here doing this form.

Roshi, years ago used to do this and I have received the hansaku and that is why I can speak about it in the way that I am. He hasn't done that in many years because at this point the students that he is working with know how to practise for long stretches of time with tension and so forth, they know how to release it. So it isn't necessary. Other Teachers such as Shikai O-sensei, myself, practice advisors do not do this. In some monasteries it is all the time, it is very, very common, but that is not the case here. So it does require a very specific kind of training to know how to do that properly. Until I know how to do it, I wouldn't do it.

[Laughter]

[Sensei] I have a little stick and I use it for adjusting postures and that's all. I certainly wouldn't hit anybody with it. So that's what the hansaku is here for. Roshi, if he uses it at all now he uses it when he's presenting teisho. When you hear the three strikes in the recordings, he uses this to do the three strikes. Traditionally that would be done with a nyoï staff, which is a very long staff. Roshi has one in the Kaisando but obviously there is no space here for anything that big so he uses the

hansaku for that. Once in a while he might use it to adjust postures, but that's all.

The whole Butsudan is here because it is like the 12 on a clock. It shows you which is the front of the room and which is the back. Traditionally, in a big monastery you would circumambulate around the Butsudan so that is why it is out in the middle of the floor. A Butsudan, by the way, is not the same thing as an altar. The word "Butsudan" itself, just means "raised platform" so this is a place where we put things that remind us of our practice.

The rupa, or "form" is there not as a religious icon. He's there because he is representative of someone just sitting in a very aligned posture. In fact, if I were to turn him sideways you would see that he has a very nice, straight spine. Hard to find in a rupa and often rupas that you will find will be very misshapen - 18 inch waist and arms that are 12 feet long and so forth. His proportions are actually quite nice. So the only reason he is there is because he represents someone who is sitting, which is what our practice is.

The candles are used because they represent the flickering of mind, something that anyone who does even a few minutes of sitting can attest to; the mind in fact does flicker. They also evoke the seeing.

The incense is used to evoke the sense of smell and the incense stick itself represents impermanence. It burns down and is gone just as we "burn down" and vanish.

The water is there because it evokes the seeing but also it represents the clarity of mind and is used as a kind of offering of our practice. If you are going to put something there, you may as well put something that is nice. Water is very nice. There's also a little bit of a joke about the water. We tend to be really stingy about offering things. When we offer something what we will almost always do is offer it and then a few moments later go [Sensei demonstrates grasping] "Oh...I don't know, I want to take that back because I might need it later".

[Laughter]

[Sensei]: So there is this very basic stingy quality that we all tend to get into, and so the water offering is there with a touch of humor because water, to us, seems to be in vast abundance and it's free. We can offer it and we have this sense that it doesn't cost us anything and yet it is a most precious commodity. It is actually very, very valuable and without it human life would not be possible. So there is a little bit of play there. Roshi has quite a sense of humor

Are there any other questions about the Butsudan or anything else?

[Student]: A lot of rupas in Zen have the hands in this position - with the left under. Is there a...

[Sensei]: Well, you'll notice with this rupa, his thumbs aren't even touching. You'll get all kinds of

variations on mudras and so forth. One of the reasons for that is because very often, the people who make them don't actually sit.

[Laughter]

[Sensei]: Don't have a clue what they're making, really, except it kind of looks like this. I think that in some traditions of training it may be that the hands are reversed from the way we do them but it doesn't really matter as long as you decide which way you are going to do things and then are consistent about that.

So again, there is nothing "magical" about the forms, but I don't know of any other reasons for placing the right hand on the bottom and the left hand on the top except that that's how somebody sat at some point and then their students learned to sit that way and here we all are today, learning the forms of this Lineage and this is how we do things.

Mudras can really vary from one tradition to another. In some places the shashu is done in an entirely different way. It is left hand formed into a fist and the right hand wraps around it. It is called "diamond fist" or something like that. But it feels completely different and if you actually do that you will see that it doesn't feel at all like shashu as we do it and it is not just because we are not used to holding our hands that way. It has a completely different "meaning", conveys something different to bodymind. So that's kind of interesting but this is how we do things so that's that.

Do you know anything further about that, Godo? That is all that I remember having encountered about it.

[Mishin godo]: No.

[Sensei]: Have you anything to add?

[Chunen angya]: The Roshi said that it's arbitrary, the position, but we need to be consistent.

[Sensei]: Yes. Sometimes people will say, "Well, I am left-handed, so I should be able to sit with the left hand on the bottom and the right hand on top."

Well no, because when you are sitting you don't need one hand to lead. Being left handed or right handed is about which hand leads when you are doing things. But when you are sitting you are not actually doing anything. You are just sitting with one hand on top of the other. So we all sit with the right hand on the bottom and the left on top. If someone is left handed and we are doing oryoki then they do all of the forms of oryoki in reverse. It's all backwards (from the perspective of someone who is right handed) and that's fine. It all works out.

[Student]: The block of wood on the wall? What is that for?

[Sensei]: That is like a drum that is used to signal various things in the monastery. So when you hear the bell downstairs and you hear the umpan in the hallway sometimes, it is because they are talking to each other. It lets everyone in the building know what is about to happen. Sometimes before more formal occasions the "han" (gesturing) is included. That is very traditional. And the characters on it mean "Great Matter". It comes from the verse,

The great matter is birth and death,  
Life slips past and time is gone.  
Right now, Wake Up! Wake Up!  
Do not waste time.

So you will find one of these in every monastery - Zen monastery that is.  
Does that answer your question?  
Yes, Cesar?

[Cesar]: Why do we chant in Japanese?

[Sensei]: Ah, because - very good question - because there are certain things that cannot be adequately translated into English. When you look at the actual meaning of certain Japanese words, there is no easy translation for them. Like, even say the word "sesshin", if you really look at the meaning of it, it means "gathering of the heart". So we say "sesshin" and we all agree that we think we know what it is, but it means a lot more than that. And the chants that are in Japanese, many of them have meanings, when we look at the literal translations and so forth, that English can't begin to touch on the meanings.

The other reason is that the origins of this practice are India , China and so forth. So we have Sanskrit and Pali, Japanese chants and we have kept some of those. Some of them are in English but there are a few that are in Sanskrit, Japanese and Pali. We want to keep some of the origins of our practice intact so this is a way of honoring them and we keep them unadulterated. They are as they are and they can be quite a mouthful when you are first learning them.

[Laughter]

[Student]: It doesn't sound like Japanese anymore, what I do.

[Laughter]

[Sensei]: You learn them through simply being exposed to them and hearing them over and over again, learning bits and pieces of phrases. And over time it all comes together.

[Ian]: When we are practising at home is there any one check-in point which you can follow that

your back is sitting straight?

[Sensei]: [Long pause] I'm stuck on the phrase, "check-in".

[Much laughter]

I don't know what that means, exactly.

Okay, when you take your posture, you take your posture and as much as possible it is straight, it's aligned. You do the forms: bowing forward, emptying the lungs of all of the stale air; straightening, inhaling; with the third exhalation let the whole bodymind relax and it will tend to move back just a tad, into balance point. From that point on you should be feeling the breath, feeling the tanden, feeling all of the sensations of the body and you should be noticing if something is changing. So you might be sitting there and if you notice that you are starting to do this [Sensei moves head to one side] that should stand out. If you are not noticing that and it is five minutes later and you kind of wake up from it and think "Why am I like this?" you've missed a whole lot of detail in between. So what you need to do is pay more attention to the sensations of the body and use the noticing of changes as a reminder to reinitiate your practice, to bring things into alignment. It's not a matter of struggling with the posture but of letting it relax and settle. Basically we let the mind fall into the body and we are not struggling with anything at all, just letting the whole thing settle.

"Check-in" kind of implies that at a certain point we go "Wha? Whoa! So where am I? What's going on with the meat?" But you should be feeling into the sensations of the body from the beginning of the practice all the way through. If you're not it's because - what we will tend to do - is screen things out. So we are not feeling the breath, we are not feeling the tanden. We might think "Oh, woopdy-do I'm feeling my thumbs. I'm being all mindful of my thumbs, aren't I?" But if we are not feeling the rest of the sensations then we have this very partial version of mindfulness going on. It needs to be the whole thing.

Does that answer your question?

[Student]: Well, I guess it does. I think if I used the word "reference" it might be better because very often Shikai O-sensei will pull us up and you get a very different sensation if you tell yourself to sit up straight. It usually sets up a lot of tension. Is that something that you can sort of do on your own? Imagine yourself being pulled up?

[Sensei] No.

I mean you can, as a rough guide it is good to bring the top of the head up towards the ceiling because it will elongate the spine and the neck and so forth, but when someone else is adjusting your posture they are seeing you from a brand new angle and they will make certain adjustments and the bodymind will go, "Oooh! That's different!" and then within even a couple of minutes it will

start to revert back to its habitual posture is...but not quite. A postural adjustment is not meant to be written in stone. It's not meant to be taken as 'THAT'S IT, HOLD THIS. DON'T BREATHE, DON'T MOVE BECAUSE IF YOU MOVE AWAY FROM THIS POSTURE AT ALL, YOU ARE WRONG'. That's a very mistaken way of thinking about things. They're just an indication.

What's more, what you need to do is feel into the sensations of the body, feel into the balance of it. If you actually feel into it, and particularly if you are sitting at home, don't move. This is so important. Because if you don't move and you really feel into the posture and work with it, what will happen is that the posture itself will show you how to sit. But if you fidget and you are constantly in there with a screwdriver trying to fix everything, you are not giving the bodymind a chance to practice sitting as bodymind. There is too much fiddling going on and that just makes things more difficult.

So you don't have to feel "Well, I had this sensation once, it was aligned in a certain way and it felt good, how can I duplicate that?" Just let go of it. It was something that occurred because someone was helping you in a certain way and now is now and the bodymind is as it is and you practice with things as they are in this moment.

If you think about it, what would happen if someone were, say, hurt in an accident or something and they have a lot of physical stuff going on and everything is really wonky. That would mean that that person could not practice and that, of course, is not true. There is no such thing as a straight line; there is no such thing as a perfect posture. It's all crooked. It always will be. That is the way that it is. We live on a round ball floating in space and we are all under the effects of crushing gravity and this thing is made of meat and bones and stuff. So there is no such thing as a straight line. Does that make sense to you?

[Student]: yes, it does.

[Sensei] Otherwise things can just become very tense.

[Student]: The use of the phrase "balance point" for example, the only way you can be in a state if you are out of balance point or...

[Sensei]: Oh, no, you could be in balance point and be in a rip-roaring state.

[Much laughter]

[Student]: I have heard that said so I am wondering if it's...balance point is referring to something beyond angles...

[Sensei]: When we are talking about "balance point" we are talking about the physical posture of the body. But through practising and learning balance and alignment there are ways in which that

information carries over into other things that we do. So it becomes integrated into other things that we do. You start to recognize when you are "off balance" when you are interacting with other people, when you are deciding what to buy on eBay...whatever. You can recognize more and more clearly when there is something that is off about how you are because you recognize some things through your practice of sitting. You know what it is to feel really balanced and for things to be very open. So when things start to get very contracted and it all goes "off", that will really stand out. That is as closely as I can answer your question right now, but I think that it is something we could discuss further another time.

I think we will end now and it is time for a round of kinhin.

The Forms of Attention

Dharma Talk by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, April 22nd, 2006

In the Jijiyu Zanmai doka: Song of the Samadhi of Self-Enjoyment, Anzan Hoshin roshi wrote:

Wherever Awareness seems to locate itself  
is only a knot of space tied within space.

Untie the knots of experiences  
and the Nature of Experiencing itself  
is clear.

The emptiness of all forms  
is only Awareness.

The fullness of all forms  
is only Awareness.

You are only Awareness.

No strategy of mind  
toward any experience whatsoever  
can lead to freedom.

Self-image will conceive of this  
easy and Perfect Path  
as an ordeal and journey.

In truth,  
it is easier than snapping your fingers  
or opening your eyes:

Do not follow and become  
the forms of attention.

The Jijiyu Zanmai doka is a "doka" or "song of the Way," a spontaneous expression of realized-practice intended to provoke recognition of advanced aspects of practice for students and was composed by Roshi during hermitage in September 1989, almost 17 years ago. It is an astonishingly simple, clear and concise set of instructions and explanations for practice. On occasion, students might chant it when sitting on their own and it is sometimes used as part of chanting practice at the monastery or at branch centres. We will chant the entire text this afternoon. Each verse flows into the next, carrying with it a vast amount of information about our practice. This morning I have read just a brief extract from the text and would like to spend a little time unfolding some of the information contained in just one sentence:

Do not follow and become the forms of attention.

The forms of attention being referred to are the result of "forming" attention into congealed patterns of thought and feeling. Attention, as it naturally is, without the activity of contraction, is vast and open. Your attention can be light, able to open to many details simultaneously, or it can thicken and congeal. When it congeals around a thought or a feeling or a storyline, we ordinarily notice only the thought or the feeling or the storyline. We typically don't notice much, if anything, about the arrangements of attention that form before the arising of the thought or feeling or storyline. Or how those arrangements or "forms" aid and abet the propagation of whatever it is that we ultimately end up obsessing about. We don't notice anything about this because it is in the interest of self-image that we not notice anything about it. Obsession distracts attention from recognizing that it has become lost within something actually arising within it.

Just sitting here in the Hatto, practising mindfulness: feeling the breath, the tanden, feeling into whole-bodily sensation and opening to the seeing and hearing, all manner of thoughts and feeling tones can come up about just about anything. But whatever we have believed ourselves and everyone and everything else to be can be released into the Luminosity of Open Knowing when we simply let go of the storylines and interpretations that come about through the congealing of

attention into "knower" and "known", "self" and "other", "this" and "that".

But that stuff is highly addictive, isn't it?

It came up in daisan with a student recently that he had spent most of a sitting round crying because he was thinking about his adult son. The storyline he was telling himself was about how sad and confused his son was, and how much he wished he could do something to change that.

I pointed out that wherever his son was and whatever he was doing at the moment that he was sitting on his zafu conjuring up all of these storylines about him, he was probably the furthest thing from his son's mind. His son might be speaking to someone or eating breakfast or perhaps sitting on the toilet, but it was highly unlikely that he was thinking about his father specifically, let alone any of the stuff he was thinking about concerning him. He had crystallized him into this sad and confused creature and every time he thought about him, he was deepening this view of him.

When we think about other people in the "privacy" of our own thoughts, we are not seeing them. What we are seeing is cartoon-like representations of recordings of inaccurate fragments of experiencing. That is not your wife or your husband or your son or your friend or your boss you are looking at. But if you spend time lost in your internalized babbling about them, talking to cartoons, in certain ways you will behave as though that conversation or interaction actually took place. And when you next see them, you will respond to them in subtle ways from that understanding of them. But they were never in on the "conversation" and so your responses will make no sense to them. Ultimately, your fears and worries about the "situation" can serve to create the situation you think you are trying to remedy.

Not only do we form cartoons of other people, we ourselves become cartoons. As attention folds into forms we become all kinds of different characters. Some are fearful, some are silly, some are angry, some are clever and some are crazy. But none of these characters are who we are.

In our day-to-day lives, these characters present themselves as different "selves". There is the "at work self"; the "at home self"; the "socializing self"; the "husband" or "wife" self; the "happy self" and the "unhappy self" to name a few. These are all structures, or arrangements of attention composed of mental factors continuously displacing one another. None of them last very long, but we ignore the fact that they constantly change. We insist that we are consistently one "I", one "self", when our actual experience shows us that we are unable to remain one way for more than brief periods of time.

When sitting on the zafu the same switching of characters occurs even within a half-hour sitting round. We get lost in thought about one thing; then the theme changes and an entirely different scenario presents itself. We follow that for a short period of time, then it switches to something else. And while we are busily switching selves and following the storylines associated with these different selves, we don't notice that each "self", each storyline, has an arrangement to it, a form,

and that these forms can be noticed and felt.

Sitting getting lost in thought about a dispute with another person, for instance, has a narrowed, heavy quality which can be felt. The cartoon character you play in the storyline may be brittle, judgmental, defensive or perhaps whiney, and can say anything it wants to say for as long as it wants to say it, without the inconvenience of being interrupted by reality, for as long as you choose to completely ignore reality.

When a different form of attention comes up, you may find yourself sitting on the zafu having a silent giddy giggle about something you think is really funny, but it is only funny to you because of the way attention is arranged in that moment.

A few minutes later, you may be lost in thought thinking about how you could invent a new system for doing something, or rearrange your living space, or create the perfect meal or paint the perfect picture. Or you might be composing a seemingly inspired verse about the sound of a bird heard a few minutes ago. And through this you are not recognizing at all that the energy of your practice has been usurped by the forming of attention into a "creative self". And worse still, because you think you are being "creative", you will not notice how densely contracted the state you are in actually is. This is not mindfulness; this is not opening. This is just yet another way in which you become the forms of attention.

When you are sitting a round of zazen, you have 30 minutes relatively free of distraction, during which you can really practice. But if you instead use that 30 minutes to concentrate the energy of thought and feeling on someone or some situation, you are propagating the same contracted patterns of attention that you ordinarily engage in, but because there is so little distraction if you do this while sitting, you will be doing it much more thoroughly than you ordinarily would. Conjuring up fabricated images and storylines about other people is rather like sticking pins in voodoo dolls. It's not at all nice. If you are conjuring up anger, fear, sadness, frustration, stories of seduction and affection or other feeling tones about that person or that situation, you are smearing this stuff all over them and you will act it out in various ways when you next encounter that person or that situation.

We believe the sense of self to be the "knower" of experience, that knowing originates in a particular place "within" us and moves out and towards what is known, that it is this movement from here to there that is the "knowing". When we are identified with a state, it doesn't matter to us that what it is that we are supposedly knowing is, quite frankly, bullshit. As long as we are experiencing the crunching and grasping of attention that accompanies churning thoughts and spinning storylines, we can convince ourselves that there is some thing going on, some kind of "truth" to whatever fabrication we are conjuring up.

When sitting, an endless array of thoughts and feelings can come up. At moments we may try to cut through them, may find ourselves following them, may attempt to apply various strategies to

them. But until we begin to notice that regardless of the content that comes up, all of it is being seen from a certain perspective or "camera angle" we won't be able to practice with the mechanisms of self-image that give rise to the thoughts and feelings. That "angle" is a form, a "shaping" of attention. In order to open attention and open to who we are beyond and before the contraction of self-image we need to recognize and release not only contraction but the image of a self that gives rise to and is fed by contraction.

In the teisho, "Framed", in the series "Painting Reality: Commentaries on Zen Master Dogen's 'Gabyo'" the Roshi says,

Within the frame of a mental space that is formed by narrowing attention there might arise an image that is beautifully rendered, with such elaborate detail and nuance of light and shadow that it is almost life-like. The face of the person you hate, the memory of their tone of voice when they said what they said yesterday or last year almost sounds as if they are speaking to you now and can almost actually hear the abuse you are retroactively lashing them with.

But all around the frame is your life. It is not life-like. It is life. The colours, forms, sounds in their coming and going are free from what appears to be going on within the frame. All around in and as the ten directions Reality is being painted by the Activity of Aware Space.

Out of all of the details that you could notice, attention will seem to move towards this or that detail, which is why it stands out. If you focus on something, that thing will seem to become larger, more important. And this is because we misunderstand knowing. We believe the sense of self to be the "knower" of experience, that knowing originates in a particular place "within" us and moves out and towards what is known, that it is this movement from here to there that is the "knowing".

When you are following a thought, indulging in a storyline or lost in a state, the thought or storyline or state seems to become the "point" of experiencing. Everything else - sensations, colours, forms, sounds - become secondary to this "point" attention is pointed towards. If anything begins to become THE point of experiencing, come back to your practice and open around it. Open to the Total Field of All Possibilities. This is not the same thing as suppressing a thought or a feeling. That would be shuttling attention from whatever you notice you are obsessing about to something else in order to distract yourself from it. Beginning students do that all too frequently: "Oh no, a thought! Feel the breath! Feel the breath!" They will try to cling to the breath as though it were some kind of life raft instead of opening to the sensations and using that as a touchstone, a place from which to open to whole-bodily sensation and the seeing and hearing.

Feel the breath together with the tanden, the sensations of the whole body and the seeing and hearing and do all of this in the same breath and at the same time. Practise whole bodymind because it is one bodymind that is sitting on the cushion, not bits and pieces. This is different from suppressing a thought or a feeling because it is not about replacing one thing with another. It is

about seeing the thought or the feeling in context. And when seen in context, it becomes immediately obvious that it is just a thought or a feeling and is the smallest part of what we are experiencing. No need to follow it, no need to avoid it, just open around it instead of staring at it. It's as easy as recognizing that you are perhaps staring intently at a bug on the pane of glass of a window, seeing nothing but the bug and then choosing to open to the seeing of the whole world all around and beyond the bug. The bug doesn't have to disappear in order for you to see more. You just need to stop staring at it.

A metaphor for practising with thoughts that is sometimes used describes the process of practicing with them as follows:

Thoughts are like clouds moving across the sky. You are the sky and the thoughts are just a movement, like clouds. Don't move attention towards them or away from them.

But there is something very important that is being left out. The metaphor implies a "watcher" of the clouds and unless this "watcher" is also released, we have not begun to practise with the mechanisms of self-image that give rise to patterns of contraction.

We need to attend to thoughts like the sky attends to clouds, not like someone sitting on the ground looking up at the clouds.

Have a good morning.

Hempen: Bits and Pieces  
by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
Dainen-ji, December 8, 2001

This Dharma Talk was presented during the ceremony before the Sangha in which Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei was publically acknowledged as a successor in the Dharma of Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi. "Den-e" means "Transmission of the robe."

During this recent time of Menju, one of the practices I was given was to study and create several documents. One was a document listing the names of all of the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors of my Lineage based on a similar document made by Roshi years ago. It was written in a very fine hand, listing the names of the Seven Buddhas and the names of the successive

Ancestors. A red thread representing a bloodline links them. Now it was time for me to make my own document. I was looking forward to the prospect of doing this, though I am not by any stretch of the imagination artistically gifted. I went to an art supply store, bought appropriate paper and two pens of the type used by architects.

The paper and pens remained in the bag next to my desk for a few days while I contemplated just how I was going to go about doing this without disconnecting my computer to make space. I finally decided to use a long side-table Shramon had provided. It was too narrow and would not allow me to turn the paper, so it would be necessary to stand the whole time I was working on it, but I thought "Well, that's okay. Standing while doing this is probably a good thing."

Scratch Scratch

Standing back, looking at the first few words I'd written, I thought, "Oh, no. This is no good. This is the most important piece of paper I've ever written on and my script is horrible."

Crumple Crumple

Get another piece of paper. Start again.

Well, the script was a little better, but the font size I'd used was inconsistent and the words were getting smaller and smaller and smaller.

Crumple

Crumple

Get another piece of paper, start again.

Several days had passed by this time, and it finally began to dawn on me that there really wasn't time to engage in a self-taught course in calligraphy and if I didn't stop arguing with myself about how it looked, it would never be finished. The Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors were not particularly interested in my calligraphy style anyway. They must be far more interested in what I understood and what I didn't, and how I would use whatever skills I could draw upon in this situation.

So I opted for my best grade four printing and continued around the circle.

K  
A  
P  
I  
M  
A  
L

A

Pause....

Um, who is Kapimala?

Oh no! I'm supposed to know this. Especially since Roshi embodies and communicates so much about the Lineage. Hmm. I'll tell you what, Kapimala, how about if I apologize and make the promise that I'll come back to your name later so that I can finish this? Kapimala was, of course, predictably silent which did not make me feel at all better.

N

A

G

A

R

J

U

N

A

Aha! I know about Nagarjuna, I've read books about him. I could know more about him, but at least I know a little and I know how to spell his name, right Nagarjuna? Nagarjuna was, of course, predictably silent, which had a disquieting effect on my momentary self-congratulatory mood.

One by one, the names appeared on the paper, some familiar, some not at all familiar, all of them raising questions. But after so many false starts I was happy that at least they were being written. And then I came to Buddhanandi.

B

U

D

D

A

A? What? That's not supposed to be an A, it's supposed to be an H! Oh no. How did that happen? It happened because you weren't paying attention. How could you not have noticed that? How could you have put pen to paper while thinking about something else?

Er. I did. Okay, so what does this mean? This means my attention span is shorter than I thought it was. You mean I have to be able to do this entire chart with open attention? Yes.

The Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors might not have been saying anything about whether or not I knew their personal stories, but even if all of them had appeared in my room at that moment, all talking simultaneously about why it was necessary to do what one is doing with open attention, the point could not have been clearer.

My personality and its characteristics condition how I express the Dharma. But they are not the Dharma. The Dharma is the realized-practice which is passed from Teacher to student. Each of these people sat. They sat for many years, examining how they understood the Teachings, how they understood their own practice and it was through this process that they eventually became Teachers.

I finished the document. It is not a work of art, but it is clear and legible. My own name appears on it, threaded into the circle.

My journey to Zen practice started a long time ago. I always wanted to practice. At three years old, I would slip between the curved back of the couch and the wall and build something resembling a Butsudan out of cardboard boxes and cloth. It wasn't an altar, a holy thing. It was just a raised platform where I could put stuff that I considered important. I put all of my favourite books on my platform, books such as Alice In Wonderland, Gray's Anatomy, assorted Dickens and the Oxford Dictionary, all very carefully arranged. It made sense because it was quite apparent to me that I had to learn how to read before I could do much else. I spent hours arranging and re-arranging books and other special objects on my cardboard box.

My reason for mentioning this is because it really was very telling. As a monk, one of my duties over the best part of the past years has been the daily cleaning and care of Butsudan. But a lot happened between, of course. I travelled extensively, I married twice, I had three daughters, I worked and I sat. A lot.

It's not so easy to find a Teacher.

There is a traditional saying that it is as rare to have a precious human birth in which to find a true Teacher as it is for a turtle swimming in the ocean to surface and put its head through a wooden yoke floating on the surface. I surfaced time and time again, and for the most part, all I found was floating debris. What I mean by that, is that in this part of the world, there are many religious and philosophical systems of training that cobble together Teachings that originated in other parts of the world, taught by people who do not really understand them, and you don't want to be lost in the realm of birth and death and find yourself trying to hang on to one of these. I had encountered and did zazen with several Zen and Tibetan Buddhist Teachers but their instructions didn't ring true for me. I already had all kinds of states. Why would I want to create more through concentrating on this or that?

However, amidst all the confusion I encountered, there was one Teacher who lived in Philadelphia that I studied closely with for about five years. I will always be grateful to him. He was an ancient

Sufi Teacher, a Tamil, who looked like a spider monkey and his name was Bawa Muhaiyaddeen. He himself told me he was not my Teacher - that I had not yet met my Teacher. But he protected me and kept me out of trouble. He used to say that he was a bit like a traffic cop, that his job was to point people in the right direction. In my case, he kept pointing to Canada.

It took me a long time to get to Canada . After living in Philadelphia, I lived in Florida for a few years. I threw myself into my work and I sat as much as I was able, but I knew what I wanted to do and needed to do, and at a certain point, I could not do otherwise.

I remember in one teisho Roshi presented, he said something to the effect that after a while some people just can't buy into the old wallpaper pasted up over open space. Most will just live with it, even if it begins to peel. Others just can't keep their fingers off of it and keep pulling away little strips. Well, I reached the point where I was standing up to my knees in strips of torn paper and it was becoming unbearable. So I sold my business and my home and moved to Canada to find my Teacher.

Sounds very simple, but it isn't. Bawa was not big on maps or names, so I had no idea what to look for or where to look. I ended up in Kanata , wondering what on earth I should do next and feeling very disillusioned. By happenstance, I heard about a Zen monk living at the Zen Centre of Ottawa, which was at that time Zazen-ji located in Chinatown . I thought, "Well, who knows, maybe she'll have something to say that will make sense." So I made an appointment to see her.

This was of course, none other than Shikai Zuiko O-sensei, who at that point was a novice monk. She listened to me and she helped me to peel away the wallpaper, with an enthusiasm that was completely unexpected. She was not a friend, but she was more of a friend to me than anyone I had ever met. And has been ever since, helping me in ways too numberless to mention. Some of those ways were sometimes difficult for both of us to go through but I am grateful for all of it. She is closer to me than anyone else I have ever known other than Roshi. I will however say that the jubon I am wearing under this koromo is one of three made for me by her during her free periods of the Rohatsu O-sesshin we have just finished.

Soon after meeting her, she asked me, "What do you really want?" I explained that I felt I had far too many ideas and concepts and strands of beliefs, a bit like a soup with too many ingredients in it, all mixed up with a lot of disappointment. What I really wanted was for someone to shine a light bulb behind my head, project my thoughts on to a wall and say, "Okay, that one's okay. That one? That's absolute garbage, get rid of it." Her response was to suggest that I attend an Introduction to Zen Workshop.

A few weeks later, I attended what was to be the last Beginner's Mind Workshop Roshi presented. I walked into the Zendo, along with a group of other people, took my seat at the very back of the room and found that I was seated opposite him. He began to speak and I could not stop smiling. To jump the gun a bit historically, I have never heard a teisho by Roshi that didn't reveal what I

was up to, why it wasn't such a good idea, how to be beyond ideas and how to be that which is real.

After that, and for the next few months, I attended every sitting I could. I listened to every teisho tape I could get my hands on and I read all of the books. If there was an opportunity to go to the Zen Centre to attend a sitting, I would re-arrange numberless details of my life to get there. Eventually I was accepted on probation as a deshi, a formal student.

One evening following a formal sitting, Roshi asked me if I had any questions, and of course, I did, so he invited me to sit at the low table in the kitchen at Zazen-ji with him and just ask away. After a while, most of the questions I had been carrying around for donkey's years had been answered and I fell into silence. We just sat for a while drinking coffee.

Suddenly Roshi looked at me and said, "Don't internalize. Come out." That really caught me off-guard. I wasn't expecting him to be able to see that I was doing that - lurking behind my eyes, thinking this and that. Which shows how little I really understood then about him and us all. Although I was not signalling it in any way, he could see exactly what I was doing. So I came out a bit and said what I was thinking and feeling. And retreated again.

Once more he said, "Come out". So I did, and then retreated again. He said, "Come on out and play". We stayed up all through the night and he pulled me out from behind everything I was hiding behind moment after moment for hour after hour although I had exhausted any stories long ago. At 5:30 or so the next morning, when the other formal students arrived for the morning sitting, we were still sitting at the kitchen table. So Roshi led the sitting and I did the bows and chants and fell asleep on my zafu.

Now it's suddenly ten years later and I'm sitting on a zafu putting you all to sleep with my story. That's all right. Everyone's stories about themselves are boring. But I hope I have given you some indication of the depth of commitment that Roshi has to his students. And of the great opportunity that I have been given and taken. And of the support given to me. I would like to thank not only Roshi for everything and Shikai O-sensei for so very much but all of my monastic juniors and everyone that I have practised and worked with. Roshi's commitment to all of his students everywhere, even those of you who haven't sat with him yet let alone had coffee or tea, comes out of his unshakeable commitment to and embodiment of the Lineage of Awakened Ancestors. As someone allowed to hold his Lineage, I can only try to always match that commitment and hope to also embody this Awakening activity more and more completely.

While making the traditional sake offering to the scroll of our Teacher's Teacher, Joshu Dainen Hakukaze zenji, in the Kaisando this morning he and I had a little chat about this. Well, it was mostly me talking but he had such big ears there no doubt was some kind of listening as I said, "I promise." When I turned there was a piece of lint on the floor for me to pick up so I guess that was his comment. Later this morning, during Jodo-e, I offered incense in the Kaisando, the Butsudhan in the Zendo, then went outside to offer incense to Sakyamuni and peer up at the morning star but it was already light out by the time I got there. I was just raising the lit incense to offer it when I

noticed someone outside the hedge walking by, their face inclined towards me. A flutter of self-consciousness moved up but I couldn't find anyone for it to refer to so it just opened out and there was the flash of a thought like, "This is the world. It includes everything: the sky, the person, the sound of morning traffic, offering the incense." In offering the incense, Sakyamuni Buddha as the offering of all of this, was there in the incense stick and its smoke. I'm speaking as if Joshu zenji or Sakyamuni were doing this or that but that's not what I mean. It's just that I have something to express and I'm trying to find a way to say it. What I mean is:

I ask all of you, having already given me so much support, please help me further to always do the work of the Way for all beings.

Have a good night.

Here is not a Direction  
by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
Dainen-ji, April 24th, 2010

Walk to the north, the south, the east, west, go up or down or in between and in any direction and you will always be here. Just as whether it is morning or night, winter or summer, spring or autumn, if you are alive, you are alive now. Here transcends all directions, now transcends all times. Here and now, here we are.

All of the Teachings of Awake Awareness point to here and now and the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors have given us this wonderfully simple practise of zazen as a means to not just understand this, but to embody it.

Here is not in your thoughts, although when there is a thought, it takes place here. It is not in your feelings, although when there is feeling, it takes place here. "Delusions are many" and "attention wanders", so when you are sitting much of your time spent on the zafu is not spent practising. Instead you are often just letting attention wander in thoughts and feeling-tones about what you view as issues, pleasant or unpleasant, related to what you perceive to be your life. And sometimes you follow compulsion and let attention wander in ideas and conceptualizations about practice.

When attention is open and more flexible and there is less of a sense of 'self' and 'other',

experiencing can be spacious and expansive. When attention is closed it becomes brittle and inflexible and the sense of self and all that it perceives itself to be in opposition to consumes our intelligence. When open, it is responsive to the directness and simplicity of experiencing; when closed it becomes claustrophobic and views experiencing as an intrusion and an interruption. When it is more open, there is less compulsion to fold intelligence into storylines about experiencing. When closed, it becomes obsessed with storylines and theories.

Giving instruction to students is not an easy job. Students are other people's adult children and, already fully grown, we come to the practice with an accumulation of habits and patterns and understandings and misunderstandings all tangled together, tightly tied by years of propagation. To some extent we may hope that the Teacher is going to sort all of these tangles out for us. Or we may recognize that, well, it's just a tangled mess, there is no point in trying to untangle it, and perhaps we should instead do something entirely different. But we are also very attached to these entanglements and can become quite reactive if the Teacher doesn't take them as seriously as we do.

We can also fall very easily into associations - transferring the meaning of one thing on to another even though there may be absolutely no relationship between them. Being corrected about a form may bring up an association of being corrected as a child and evoke strong reactivity even though these two events have nothing in common. The sound of chanting in the Hatto may evoke a strong feeling-tone of wishfulness simply due to a fragment of memory of being a very small child awestruck by hearing many voices resonate in the acoustics of a large church and having wished at that time to somehow BE that sound. Or we can be reactive and angry and feel rebellious for the same reason.

Countless examples of this can be found in the forms we use. For instance, the simple form of brushing your zabuton before getting up can be distorted by becoming overly-obsessive about removing every particle of dust from it, or it can become distorted by a careless sweep of the hand that accomplishes nothing - a token gesture that is 'form-like'. Neither of these is the form. The form is to pay attention, here and now to what you are doing, to do what is needed - not less and not more. And this is important because if you over-do it or under-do it, your tendency will be to over-do or under-do in most other things you do and this will create needless complexity for you.

And so all of our habits and patterns and associations will come up in our practice of Zen and they will influence how we practise and how we interact with practice advisors and Teachers. And this could make things extremely complex. But it can all be so much simpler if we just allow ourselves to be here. Just here. Not an idea about "here", not thinking about being mindful, but actually just allow ourselves to be where we are in reality.

Over time it becomes more and more obvious that the 'life issue' stuff is not going to sort itself out through your thinking about it while sitting on a zafu. That is not what the practice is about. When you do that, it is because you are already confused and so if you do that during zazen, you will

only perpetuate and deepen your confusion. Of course, there are times when you are going to fall into that, just as at times you will sink and slump in your posture and fall asleep, but let's be clear about there being certain standards in place that you should be making the effort to uphold. So if you do fall into that, pull yourself out of it as soon as you are able by actually choosing to practise here and now. By sitting up straight, by paying attention to the details of here and now.

When you are sitting, it can seem to you as though you are separate from everyone and everything around you. It is as though you are 'inside' of the bodymind, in a seemingly private space which only you know the details of. And it can seem to you that what you are trying to do while sitting is to be deliberately aware so that you can experience the bigger aware thing that contains you and everything else that is maybe far outside of you or maybe can be found deep, deep inside of you. None of this is true. You are not a container. Awareness is not a container. The body and mind arise within the world. The bodymind and world, the sense of "self" and "other" are all knowns arising within Awareness. But Awareness has no edges, nothing outside of it. Experiences are not what Experiencing is and it is not any experience and cannot be experienced by anything outside of it.

The practise of zazen will take everything away from you. No matter how hard you try to hang on to your beliefs and ideas and strategies, if you practise it will do no more for you than leave you just sitting here and now on the zafu, as who and what all of the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors have realized themselves to be.

While zazen takes everything away from you this does not mean that you lose your abilities and capacities. When we allow ourselves to be just where we are, we do not lose north, south, east, west. When we allow ourselves to be present right now, in the only time that actually is, we do not lose memory or the capacity to anticipate and plan. It means that you lose the "you" that is separate from "everything". We just lose the anxiety and insulation of anticipating our life and the frustration of our life never meeting our plans.

Just after Third Bell before the formal sitting on Sunday, February 28th of this year, the Roshi and I stood in the snow on the front porch of the monastery and listened to a flock of Canada geese flying overhead. This was completely unexpected as they often come back through this area only by late April. The Roshi commented that he hoped they were right, more out of concern for their well-being as they were announcing spring a full month earlier than usual. But they were right and within a couple of weeks all of the snow was gone and we began to see the first buds on branches. Now it is only the end of April and with these unusually high temperatures tulips are blooming while the leaves on the trees are still unfurling.

But as strange as this rapid onset of spring is, even stranger is the signs that one can see here and there in stores or on banners hung outside, saying such things as "spring is here" or "spring is in the air". Everywhere you look, there are signs of new growth in an astonishing array of colours. Moss and tiny plants push up between paving stones and the cracks in asphalt and concrete. The

young leaves on bushes and trees display new life in green and red and gold and the yellow petals of dandelions shine in the sunlight. Everywhere roots and branches exert new life to make use of the warmer days and increased sunlight. Walking along Daly Avenue near the monastery, there is so much to notice, so many new colours and shapes, so many birds and squirrels, spiders and ants, all released from the heavy cold of winter, enjoying this time of relative ease.

All around, there is so much to encounter, to meet, that is not what we expect, not what we are aiming ourselves towards.

This moment and this place, this here and this now, cannot be aimed at. They can only be opened to. Here is not a direction.

Sometimes, sunk into some kind of state of passion, aggression, or stupidity, students will ask what use it is to practise feeling the breath and body and pay attention to the sense fields. But one might just as well ask what use it is paying attention to spring or winter, or to the taste of food, or see clouds and rain, trees and buildings. Where do you think you are? How do you know where you are except through seeing and hearing and sensations and smells? One can close attention down so much and become so internalized that only fragments of the world are noticed, but why would you want to do that? It's not fun. And if attention is not open to the whole of experiencing here and now, where is it? Locked down into mental states, confusion, depression, anger, fear, discursiveness, cut off and isolated from the vividness and expansiveness of experiencing. So we sit on zafu and do this practice and learn to really pay attention to where we are and what is going on around us in the simplest of environments - that of a practice room. And in learning to attend with the whole bodymind, we learn to release the recoil and refusal of self-image that has limited and constrained us. It is a very, very simple choice. As simple as the difference between walking down a street during the spring not noticing anything because you are preoccupied with a state, or choosing to pay attention and notice the details of spring, here and now.

Over many years I had tried a lot of things while sitting on a zafu, maybe even most things, and it's got me nowhere. But here.

When students first begin practising feeling the breath can seem such an arduous task. It can seem to make sense to self-image that if you feel a breath, then you've done it and something should happen. But in a practice interview or daisan a student will be told, "No, not once or twice or five times during a sitting round -- you need to stay with the breath for the whole sitting round. And not just the breath, but the tanden and the sensations of the rest of the body and seeing and hearing, all at the same time, all in the same breath." The usual reaction to this is "What? I can't do that. That's impossible." But of course, it's not impossible. It requires practice. It requires noticing that if you are not paying attention the breath and the sensations of the body and seeing and hearing it is because you are doing something else and whatever that something else is, whether it be getting lost in thought or roiling about in a feeling tone, you need to let go of it in order to attend with the whole body.

Students are asked to relax their eyegaze and open to peripheral vision and often a strategy will come up of trying to 'push' the eye-gaze open, as though one were forcing open the shutter of a camera. But of course that leaves everything out about the relaxing part of opening to peripheral vision. And that is just one of the ways in which something as simple as seeing in a relaxed manner can become complexified. There is a wide range of battles students can engage in about seeing - smoky walls, disappearing walls, eye strain, wearing glasses, not wearing glasses, furious blinking, not blinking at all and tearing up, locking eye-gaze on the wall and narrowing attention into makyo (projections of mind on the wall) to name a few. Although all we are doing is facing a blank white wall and opening attention to seeing, it takes some time to learn to let it be just that simple. All of that other complicated stuff is the result of habitual tension, confusion about just letting the eyes see, and different strategies we act out even with our eyes. If one is sitting only once a week or even a few times a week, it can take some time to learn to let go of all of this complexity and just let yourself sit and see at the same time. And once you do, it is SUCH a relief to just see what you are seeing.

But those are very simple examples of the kind of complexity we can bring to simple matters. It can become much more complicated than that. We also bring to this very simple practice all sorts of ideas about what we are doing when we are practising and what we hope to accomplish by practising, and none of this, or very, very little of it will have anything at all to do with actually practising.

Self-image is in part a collection of tightly bundled, deeply-rooted beliefs, ideas, attitudes, stances and strategies. When you are sitting and are able to notice something about being lost in thought or feeling-tones, you are seeing a little of the contractions that make up these bundles of contorted perception. These are what prevent you from being able to feel clearly, see clearly, hear clearly. This is what causes the sense of separation between you and what you seem to be experiencing.

Beginning to recognize this is an important development in a student's practice because when one is practising there can be a tendency to set up a struggle between the sense of a self trying to practise opening attention and what it is trying to open to. The result of this will be the perception of the bodymind as a kind of container surrounded by all of these 'things' - colours and forms and sounds and sensations - that "I" am trying to open to. Or perhaps it could be described as an "I", a sense of self, which is aware, trying to be aware of details it could be aware of, trying to catch them in a kind of net of awareness.

But Awareness is not a container. You are not a container. The body and mind arise within the world. The bodymind and world, the sense of "self" and "other" are all knowns arising within Awareness. But Awareness has no edges, nothing outside of it. Experiences are not what Experiencing is and it is not any experience and cannot be experienced by anything outside of it.

Initially this strategy will give itself away because there is also a tendency to label that which is

noticed, but with or without the labeling the sense of directionality, of a self in relationship to the things around it, can continue.

Attention shrinks away from the openness of experiencing, narrowing and compressing into the sense of a self or a knower, which Zen Master Anzan Hoshin has at times described as an "enframing". From this frame, attention moves from the frame, narrowed and contracted by the frame, to this or that in the world.

But as the Roshi has also said in his text "On Enframing", which is part of the "Space, Activity and Knowing" series of teisho,

But all around the frame is your life. It is not life-like. It is life. The colours, forms, sounds in their coming and going are free from what appears to be going on within the frame. All around, in and as the ten directions, Reality is being painted by the Activity of Aware Space."

'Here' is not a direction you can go in. It is something that you can hide from. Something you can deny and lie to yourself and to others about. You can aim for it or back away from it. But it is much simpler than all of your strategies and tactics.

So here we are. Welcome. And thank you for your efforts in this Dharma Assembly.

Hojo Renovations 2020

August 4th, 2020 - November 10th, 2020

Part 1: Demolition, Framing and Insulation

Here the kitchen area has been gutted with the old oak flooring removed and the doorway to the closet opened up. This floor is extremely sloped (4 inches from one side of the room to the other) and this will be corrected with a new sub-floor. The opened up closet door will become the space for the fridge with the closet accessed from the office extended to use the newly made space behind the fridge.

This is a view of the same area from inside the closet. The new sub-floor is being installed to level out the main room so it is safe and level to walk on. The rear wall behind the fridge is being installed.&nbsp;

This is inside the washroom which was gutted back to the brick. Lots of mouldy drywall was taken out, multiple layers of linoleum, plaster and lathe. Framing has begun on the showers and closet area.

Another view of the washroom after demolition. The hung ceiling containing very poor insulation was removed and a new sloped ceiling is being installed. All of the walls in the washroom will receive spray foam insulation to stop any air leaks leaving the room and using icicles during the winter.

Another view of the kitchen area with all the old cabinets removed. New water lines will be fed directly from the basement and new drain lines are being installed so that the Hojo receives consistent hot water and the drains work well (which has not been the case for 25 years).

Here the sloped subfloor is being installed and flooring has been removed so new plumbing can be installed.&nbsp;

This is a view inside the washroom after the demolition and as the framing starts.&nbsp;

Here the framing for the new shower is being installed and the water lines are going in. All of the 100 year-old plumbing is gone. As we needed to remove two radiators in order to level the floor, the hot water lines are being connected to underfloor heating pipes which will provide warmth during the winter and be more efficient than electric heat.&nbsp;

Here the plywood flooring is being installed so that the main room is level. Framing and wiring can be seen for the fridge.

The plywood subfloor was installed.

The washroom is ready for the spray foam insulation. The raised floor can be seen in this image so there is now no step down from the main room into the washroom eliminating a tripping hazard.&nbsp;

Here the spray foam insulation is completed, creating an airtight insulation around the exterior wall of the washroom. The huge icicle that formed every year hung from the roof over this room so we did everything we could to prevent water vapour from seeping through the roof to stop the icicle from forming. In addition to the foam, vapour barrier was added.

This is the ceiling of the washroom. The extra space above the old ceiling has been opened up to create a vaulted ceiling so the room will feel much more spacious. The ceiling has been insulated with spray foam and vapour barrier.&nbsp;

Here the floor is opened up between the office and the washroom to run new drains from the

kitchen area.

## Part 2: Drywall and flooring

After the spray foam insulation had cured fully the waterproof drywall was installed in the washroom. The square hole high on the wall is for an extracting fan.

With the drywall complete in the washroom the tile backer board was installed in the shower unit. You can see in this image underfloor radiant heating pipes which replaces the washroom radiators which needed to be removed due to the floor height change.&nbsp;&nbsp; 

Here is a view of the new storage closet being built next to the shower.

Here is a view from the office door towards the washroom. The eight inch step down into the washroom has gone, creating a much better and safer transition between rooms.

Here is the same view with the new red oak flooring being installed.&nbsp;&nbsp; 

This is a view of the kitchen area with the new floor going down.&nbsp;&nbsp;

Here is the installation of the floor tile in the washroom. It is large format slate style tile with a good heavy non-slip texture.&nbsp;

Another image of the tile installation. We decided to have a “no-step” shower to avoid any tripping hazards in the washroom.

### Part 3 - Cabinets and countertops

Following the insulation, drywalling and floor tiling, the cabinets were brought in for the new kitchen area.

Closet cabinets with drawers.

The cabinets are installed so that measuring is possible for the countertops.

Another image of the cabinetry.

Another view of the new kitchen cabinets showing the new island. The island built by Saigyo ino is now being used in the monastery kitchen.&nbsp;

Island countertop installed.&nbsp;

Countertops installed. The wooden contraption is holding the undercounter sink in place until the sealant and caulk dries.&nbsp;

Information on Dana  
from the Administrative Council

The Practice of Generosity

Note:&nbsp;Financial difficulty is never an obstruction to practice. Please contact the treasurer if you are unable to contribute due to illness or other extenuating circumstances.

Dana is the traditional term used to describe donations made to the Zen community. Dana allows each of us to take responsibility for what we receive through our practice, and help to offer it to others. Students are asked to contribute monthly dana, as noted below. Participation in such events such as Dharma Assemblies, Daruma Kata-aiki classes, retreats and meals also call for a dana contribution. Suggested dana levels are set by the Administrative Council, with the approval of the Practice Council.

Suggested Monthly Dana

Associate and associate public students \$95 per month

General and general public students \$120 per month

Formal students (deshi)&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;\$150 per month

Monastics \$150 per month

Dana for Preliminary Students

Preliminary practice interviews \$10 per interview

Dana for Practice Activities

Retreats \$50 per day/\$40 partial day

Residential training \$65 per day (includes food, laundry facilities and wifi).

Sesshin \$35 per day

Dharma Assemblies \$40

Yaza/Joya \$25

Temple Dana \$108 (offered upon acceptance as a general student, general public student, or formal student)

Other Contributions (not eligible for charitable tax receipts)

Breakfast \$5&nbsp;

Lunch or Supper \$10&nbsp;

Contributing Dana by Pre-authorized Remittance

Pre-authorized remittance is the preferred means of contributing dana, with benefits to both students and the White Wind Zen Community. The monastery relies on dana and residents fees to meet sizeable monthly expenses (the mortgage and property taxes, utilities, repairs and renovations, and expenses for practice programs). The regularity of pre-authorized remittance ensures the funds are available when needed and significantly reduces the bookkeeping time needed to process dana. You can make regular dana contributions through pre-authorized remittance (automatic monthly debit from your bank account of a pre-determined amount) thanks to a low-cost program run nation-wide by the United Church of Canada. To sign up or for more information, please contact Mishin godo (Treasurer) at [mishin at gmail dot com](mailto:mishin@gmail.com).

Cheques

Please make cheques for dana contributions payable to "White Wind Zen Community". Post-dated cheques are preferable as they simplify book keeping procedures. Please direct information about the amount that you will be contributing, or any questions about dana, to the Office of the Treasurer using the contact page. White Wind Zen Community operates financially on a very narrow margin of cash each month, and the suggested level is what will be assumed.

Financial Hardship

If you are experiencing severe financial hardship and so are unable to offer the suggested amount of dana, please email Mishin godo, the treasurer, to let us know at [mishin at gmail dot com](mailto:mishin@gmail.com). When a student living within commuting distance of the monastery is not able to offer the full suggested dana contribution, it is appropriate to offer a regular samu contribution of 8-10 hours per month; please contact Saigyo ino at [saigyo at gmail dot com](mailto:saigyo@gmail.com) to arrange a samu schedule.

For students living outside of commuting distance of the monastery:

As a preliminary student, the instruction you receive initially by email will be for the purpose of clarifying your understanding of Zen practice so that you can eventually apply as a student. There is no expectation that people contribute dana (financial contributions) until they apply as a student

and are accepted. It normally takes at least two or three months of email correspondence to complete that process of establishing a foundation, so you needn't be concerned about any financial obligation until then.

Once accepted as a student you will be using more of the resources of the monastery, including our Media Site. If your financial situation is such that you cannot make the full recommended dana contribution as a public student (\$95.00 a month Canadian), then you can write to the treasurer to let her know your situation and contribute what you can until it changes, even if it's just \$5.00 a month. You would just need to keep her informed as she has to budget from month to month and our financial situation is always tight. We subsidize the practice of a number of students. Some are unemployed; some are ill, some are university students; some are single parents and so forth. None of this is a problem as long as we all agree about how we define "financial hardship". If the choice is between a dana contribution and being able to pay one's rent, that is one thing. If the choice is between going to the movies and drinks with friends and ordering pizzas or making a dana contribution, that's another. I think you will get my drift.

We do ask you to remember that dana provides over half of the revenue needed to cover monthly expenses for White Wind Zen Community. Your contributions provide a significant proportion of the financial means to support this practice environment, undertake the necessary repairs and renovations to this heritage property, and pay the mortgage. Traditionally, it is the contributions of lay students that support the work of monastics to make this practice available to students. To date, however, this has not been the case in White Wind Zen Community and monastics have paid for much of the Community's expenses, undertaking paid employment in addition to significant samu (Caretaking) work. Monastics each offer countless hours a year without remuneration from the Community in order to support the practice of students like yourself. This work includes presenting teisho and Dharma Talks; meeting students in daisan and practice interviews; offering Introductory Workshops; email correspondence with students and face-to-face meetings with those in preliminary stages of practice; making the Teachings available through copying teisho tapes and CDs, transcription, re-mastering deteriorated teisho tapes and tape mailings to public students; producing the weekly newsletter, the "eMirror" and maintaining, updating and upgrading the WWZC website and media site. None of this is possible without your financial support. Thank you for your generosity.

"May all beings be happy  
May they be peaceful  
May they be free."

## Introduction to Zen Workshop (Ottawa)

### Upcoming Workshops

[Buy Tickets on Eventbrite](https://IntroductionToZenWorkshop.eventbrite.ca)

Register Now

Saturday, December 9th, 2023

Saturday, January 6th, 2024

Saturday, February 3rd, 2024

### Time and Location

The workshop begins at 2:00 p.m. and ends at about 4:00 p.m followed by an informal discussion. Please arrive by 1:45 p.m. for orientation. Dainen-ji, Zen Centre of Ottawa, is located at 240 Daly Avenue (on the corner of Daly Avenue and Friel Street) in Ottawa's Sandy Hill District.

### Workshop Purpose

The workshops are designed to give people a formal introduction to Zen practice, the basis of which is "sitting", or "zazen". Instruction in posture (including how to sit on a zafu or cushion, a seiza bench or a chair) and basic elements of mindfulness practice is provided. There is also some explanation of why zazen is not merely meditation or contemplation or the cultivation of particular states. During the workshop, we spend a portion of the time actually doing the practice and so by the end of the workshop people have enough information to begin to establish a practice at home, which is essential if it is to be effective.

### Further Instruction

Following the workshop those who wish to continue can make arrangements to meet privately with a practice advisor to discuss their practice and ask any questions they may have. This would be the beginning of a series of meetings for the purpose of clarifying the student's practice to prepare



```
console.log('Order complete!');  
};
```

```
window.EBWidgets.createWidget({  
  widgetType: 'checkout',  
  eventId: '417463674087',  
  modal: true,  
  modalTriggerElementId: 'eventbrite-widget-modal-trigger-417463674087',  
  onOrderComplete: exampleCallback  
});
```

// ]]>Or you can mail a cheque or money order (made payable to "White Wind Zen Community") to: White Wind Zen Community, 240 Daly Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6G2. Or if you are in the neighbourhood, you can leave the cheque in a sealed envelope in the mailbox at the front door of the monastery, including your name, address, and the date of the workshop you will be attending.

If for some reason you are unable to attend the workshop, please let us know this in advance by&nbsp;sending an email&nbsp;or by calling the Zen Centre office to leave a message on the answering machine at 613-562-1568. If your contribution has already been received, it will be applied to a workshop you can attend at a later date.

For more information concerning the workshop, please send an email;or telephone the Zen Centre office 613-562-1568. For those living outside of commuting distance of the monastery, instruction in Zen practice is available through our Long-distance Training program

Please note that workshop participants must be 16 years of age or over.; Those who are 16-18 years old must have parental permission to participate in the workshop.

### Further Suggested Reading List

Beginner's Mind Workshop : This is the transcript from a Workshop presented by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi in 1991, shortly before he retired from public appearances. His time is now dedicated to the training of monks and senior students. Workshops are presented by Dharma Teachers and practice advisors trained and authorized by Roshi to guide people through the beginning stages of Zen practice.

Entering the Gates of Practice by the Practice Council

The Posture of Zazen&nbsp;presented by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Five Styles of Zen presented by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

The Posture of Practice presented by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei

Thinking About Not Thinking presented by Ven. Jinmyo Renge osho-ajari

Just a Moment

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, April 26th, 2008

Excuse me. Just a moment. I thought you might like to know that

In the Genjokoan, Dogen zenji gives us this instruction:

"Allow each moment to take its own time".

Joshu Dainen roshi provides further explanation in his teisho, "Water Burns the Stone":

"One moment of just sitting is one moment of enlightenment." These are the words of the Buddhas and Dharma Ancestors. These are words of a dead baldman, Dogen Kigen zenji. One instant of true practice is one instant of enlightenment. True practice is true effort. True effort is true non-effort. True non-effort is without mind so it is Mu-shin (no-mind). Mu-shin is right this moment now. This is instantaneous enlightenment: enlightenment occurs in each instant. Without past, without future, without even "now", seeing clearly is practice. Anzan sensei has a phrase which I like: "It does not matter what is seen, it is the seeing that matters."

&nbsp;

"Now what do I see? I see you. Peek-a-boo. I see a bunch of ragged monks trying to struggle to get into the next moment; away from fear and pain or into bliss or Mu or something. But this moment holds your quivering bodies and minds firmly, hai? Now, this moment is not a thought you can hold to. It is just now. Practice in this way.

"Shug-yosha! (Practitioners!) Where are you going in such a hurry there in your lotus postures? To the washroom? To the kitchen? To dokusan? If you come to dokusan, I won't be able to get you out of this. Dokusan is still this moment. The Sensei won't be able to get you out. You're here, in this moment. Dokusan is face to face meeting with the Teacher's mind. Zazen is dokusan, is face to face, with this moment. This moment, any moment is true dokusan with all the Buddhas and Ancestors because the mind of all Buddhas is this moment.

"Your smelly bodies and smelly minds are this moment. Smelly Buddha! (laughs) this moment is

your body and your mind. All of your karma of past minds, past actions, has unfolded into this moment and is this moment. Hai, you don't have karma, whether good, whether bad; this body, this mind is your karma. So here it all is! Here it all is! These thoughts, these struggles, these joys. All of you is here, right now.

"Breathe in, breathe out, okay? If you try to make some "nirvana" your home, you only hide forever in your own in-turned minds, your personal safety. Nirvana has no place, no time. You cannot get to it. It is always HERE (shouts and bangs teisho table with staff). Breathe in, breathe out. If you make struggle your way, you lose your way in a dark forest of tense muscles, tense thoughts. Relax."

Anzan Hoshin roshi said it this way:

"If not now, when? If not here, where?"

We have NOW, this moment to practice. Just this moment. And just this moment. And just this moment.

Eihei Dogen zenji said in "Uji":

There is nothing but this moment and so each moment is all of being-time... Each moment of now is all of time, the entire world. Do you think any being or world can be excluded from this "right now?"

And further, also from "Uji":

This mind moment is the moment of Awakening within and through the display of Reality. Dropping the moment of words is the key to going further. Dropping off the body has arrived at this moment. Not arriving is this moment of "one with this, free from this." You should understand and actualize this being-time.

In Shinjin Gakudo Eihei Dogen zenji said,

In this moment, this true human body is you and I as this moment, as the whole world of ten directions.

The root of our practice is shikantaza or "just sitting". "Taza" means "just". Just this moment.

In the Satipatthana sutta, the Buddha said,

Forget the seven years monks. If one practices these Four Foundations of Mindfulness for six

years, for five, for four, for three or two, even for one year, one of two desired fruits can be expected: direct insight into here and now or, if there are still some traces of grasping, the condition of no returning. Forget the year monks. If one practices these Four Foundations of Mindfulness for seven months, one of two desired fruits can be expected: direct insight into present experiencing or, if there are still some traces of grasping, the condition of no returning. Forget the seven months monks. If one practices these Four Foundations of Mindfulness for six months, for five, or four, or three, or two, or one, or even for half a month, one of two desired fruits can be expected: direct insight into here and now or, if there are still some traces of grasping, the condition of no returning. Forget the half a month monks. If one practices these Four Foundations of Mindfulness for seven days, one of two desired fruits can be expected: direct insight into present experiencing or, if there are still some traces of grasping, the condition of no returning.

Eihei Dogen zenji said in "Gyoji":

...the ancient sages treasured each month, each day, each, moment more than their own eyes or more than their native soil. Wasting time is being stained and confused by the fame and gain of this floating world. Not wasting time is acting for the Way within the Way.

And this in Shinjin Gakudo:

In this moment, this true human body is you and I as this moment, as the whole world of ten directions.

Just a moment. Excuse me, just a moment. Pause, stop whatever you are doing and let it be just this moment. The Buddha is often depicted holding out a hand, palm out. This is called the abhaya mudra, the gesture that shows that you can be free of fear. As Roshi has pointed out, it means, "Stop that." Just stop following that thought, stop telling yourself stories about the world. Listen to what the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors are telling you.

Just a moment. This moment is not merely a moment. It is just this moment. It is just this. The Japanese word "tada" or "just" means purely so, completely so, decisively so. This moment is the reality of your life. So, please, excuse me, but just a moment. Stop. Let go. Sit up straight. In this moment and in each moment of this Dharma Assembly.

Lineage

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, May 1st, 1998

Practising mindfulness of this moment can seem to be a very slippery thing. After all the moment is always going away. The moment isn't anything solid that we can take hold of and say "Look moment, I'm going to be mindful of you." The breath is moving.

If we try to be mindful of a step by getting hold of the sensation then we wouldn't be taking a step anymore, we would be standing. I have seen people do this in kinhin. Focussing on the sensation of the step, they slow down and stop, standing there with one foot in front of the other while the line of people before and behind them continue to move. They shake themselves awake from this focussing and then continue to walk. Mindfulness is not taking hold of anything. It is more a letting go of whatever you are focussing on and opening up. Moments come and go, always in motion.

In each moment we must reinitiate our practice and begin again. As our practice continues, something begins to happen. Instead of our renewing our mindfulness of the moment, the moment begins to renew our mindfulness. Sounds, sensations, whatever is going on, whatever is coming and going shakes us out of our habitual focussing and wakes us up.

In the book *Mountains and Rivers*, Zen Master Anzan Hoshin says something very interesting. He says that Zen is "Waking up to Waking Up." It is just a small comment. He said this in passing. The words were spoken and the moment of saying them was gone. Fortunately the words were recorded, transcribed, and published. There is something in this simple phrase that unlocks practice. Zen practice and realization are a process of endless Awakening. Anzan Roshi always points out to us how rich and fresh Reality is. When we see what is being pointed to, we wonder how we never saw it because it was so simple. For almost 2,600 years there has been a Lineage of such Teachers pointing, and students looking and seeing.

I thought it might be useful to talk about Lineage because there is nothing at all like it within our experience of our culture. Many books have been written by many people for a long time. Today there are philosophers inspired by Heidegger. There are scientists inspired by Newton and Einstein. Carpenters use principles worked out by people who lived hundreds of years ago. Many recipes that cooks use have been around for hundreds of years. But the Lineage of Awakened Ancestors is not a matter of inspiration. It is not a matter of adopting a doctrine or even picking up a notion held by someone famous and then living by it. It is a direct Transmission between a Teacher and a Sangha, a Community of students. It is not the same as a sect or an institution although some people have made it into that. In Asia, people belonging to different Lineages often dislike each other. Politics between these sects cause slander and hostility. But all of the Lineages are the same when we trace them back.

The Rinzai and Soto Lineages were once the same and throughout history many Soto and Rinzai monks have studied with each other. So, as students of Zen Master Anzan Hoshin of the

Hakukaze stream of the Soto Lineage, you are not members of some Japanese Buddhist Church. You do not need to say to yourself, "I'm a Soto so nuts to those Obaku Zen people." Forget that. You are members of the family of Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors and get to sit and share the wisdom of their experience.

Very recently the Roshi was ill and so Fusatsu, the Renewal of the Precepts was delayed. He decided to combine the Monday evening formal sitting with the general sitting so that the monastics leading the general sitting could attend. On this Monday evening there were some very new associate students, two of them attending their first sitting as students. I was very worried that the situation would be chaotic but everyone did very well. The Roshi said a few words to everyone so that the new students would have some context for what was going to happen. Part of what he spoke about was an explanation of the chanting of the names of the Lineage of the Awakened Ancestors. I wrote this down afterwards. He said,

Lineage is the thread of continuity of the availability of Reality through realization and practice. From teacher to student, from moment to moment, the Dharma has been Transmitted and renewed. In chanting through the names of the Awakened Ancestors of the Lineage we invoke this thread of continuity and are reminded to ourselves take responsibility for it by renewing our practice.

So this is what I want to talk about. With empty hands we bow to the Lineage, to those who with empty hands gave us what cannot be held. When Dogen zenji returned to Japan bearing the Transmission from Rujing zenji he said he came back with empty hands. With these empty hands he was able to pick up and show Reality to his students. When we chant the Lineage, we chant the names of people we never met, most now long dead, like Eihei Dogen and Tiantong Rujing and Daiji Tenku and Joshu Dainen. They never chanted in English, as we sometimes do, but if we practise chanting as they did, feeling the breath, hearing the breath become sound, aligning ourselves with Awakened Awareness, the Lineage fills this room, here and now.

The Lineage is a succession of realized teachers. They were unique in their style and vivid in their presentation, but what they were presenting was not a system of beliefs or a set of rules. The Teachers of our Lineage stand as exemplars because they were each individuals who chose to dedicate their lives into the investigation of what is true. Their understanding, collectively, is a multifaceted jewel of Dharma, which shines in all directions, pointing to the Luminosity which is our true nature.

You may have thought that a Dharma Talk entitled "Lineage" would be a sort of history lesson. If Dharma could be understood through memorizing and regurgitating texts, it would be very easy to speak for an hour as though I knew all about it. But I am not going to do that. In fact, the truth be known, I usually avoid quoting from the accounts of my Ancestors. From what I have read and have come to understand about any one of these Teachers, I find it extremely difficult to say anything about them that I think will accurately represent what they were pointing to, so I'd just as

soon not, just yet.

When I first began to practise, a very simple question came up for me. You see, I had studied with various systems, schools and some organized religious approaches for some twenty years before I met Ven. Anzan Hoshin Roshi. These included Sufism, Hinduism and various philosophical systems. And while I learned all sorts of names and dates, stories, theories, and so forth, none of these seemed to have much to do with my life or the lives of those around me. And I had often found that the knowledge acquired by people within such systems was used in ways that I found quite incomprehensible. Often it was used to defend a stance, to exert power over others or as a strange form of entertainment.

When I began to practise, it was immediately apparent that what I was being taught was how to enter into my own life, my own experience in a very simple and direct manner: Feel the breath, feel the hands, feel the feet, know where you are. The truth about how we sit, stand, walk, lie down, feed ourselves, do anything at all is not to be found in a thought about it. The Roshi's instructions were very clear, very precise. But then, I wondered, what about Buddhism? What was I to do about all of those books I had not read, stories and names and dates?

The practise of Zen is practising practice, literally something that we do. So, for some time, the question of what to do about all things "Buddhist", loomed before me in my imagination as a towering wall of dusty books. And the wall had not finished growing, but was being added to with endless volumes of new interpretations. There are so many books being published every year. Trying to understand all of this must inevitably result in an impossible exam that I was doomed to fail and I thought "Acckkk! I will never be a "Buddhist". I was very hesitant to admit to the Roshi that I thought it most likely that I would flunk even elementary Buddhism. Most certainly if he knew what a dunce I was, he would throw me out. After all, not only is he a realized Master, but a great scholar as well. He reads sutras for fun. He reads doctoral theses for entertainment. But, one day, the subject of "classical Buddhism" came up and I decided to throw both fear and caution to the wind and show him my wall of dusty, unopened books. I asked, "Roshi, why Buddhism?" He was not at all taken aback and, in fact, smiled and responded as though he found this to be a perfectly reasonable question. He said, very simply "Because Buddhism works." Well, actually there was a lot more context given. I'll try to recount it as clearly as I can. He said that what is true is just true. All kinds of things can seem to be true but what seems to be true depends upon the context given. A small context in which most information is shut out can make anything seem to be true because we don't know anything except what that context allows. If we take that truth into a larger context then usually it is no longer true. So to know what is true, we must look at the context and see if it is open or closed. If what we know and how we know it has to close out the feeling of the feet, the richness of the colours and sounds, then it might seem to be true but cannot be. What is true is true for everyone, always. No one owns the truth. There are all kinds of spiritual systems and most of them have meditation techniques of some sort. Even prayer. But what works is the same. When a Christian monk gets up at 4 in the morning and kneels at a hard wooden pew and says his prayers, it doesn't matter what he is saying or who he thinks he is praying to. It is the knees at the

pew that matter. I remember he laughed while he said this. It is working with the experience of the bodymind that works. Unfortunately, he said, these spiritual systems tend to get confused about what works because they take their doctrines and prayers too seriously. So whether that form of spirituality works or not is kind of hit and miss.

Buddhism is about what works, what doesn't work, and why. Zen is more direct about this than most other forms of Dharma. The Soto Lineage has been concerned with making sure that this is practised in each moment, *gyoji dokan*, or Turning the Wheel of Continuous Practice. The Hakukaze Soto stream has kept this as clear as they could while many other streams within the Lineage became confused by the subtlety of the practice and now think of *zazen* as a kind of sacrament instead of a rice and tea (or bread and butter) matter.

He also said that he did not care whether what we do is called Zen or Dharma or not. What matters is that it works. After the Roshi had taken my wall down so effectively, I found myself surrounded with books which recounted the stories of students, like myself, learning to play with experience and taught by teachers, like our own, who must first teach us to how to have fun. I could go back in time and find dozens of examples of this but what those Awakened Ancestors have said is fresh and alive to me only because my experience in my own practice with my own teacher. So here, instead, is my transcription of a recent encounter between our living Lineage holder and a student:

In the evenings a series of strikes on the *densho*, *umpan*, and *han* signal that the monastic and lay residents of *Dainen-ji* are assembled for the *Shushin-ge*, the chants which close the day. Following the bows to the *butsudan* and then to the *Sangha*, Zen Master Anzan Hoshin always asks, "Is there anything we should discuss?" On one such evening a student from one of the branch centres of the Zen Community was on the second day of his second retreat at *Dainen-ji*. The Roshi asked, "So, are you having fun?" "Sometimes," the student said. "'Sometimes'?" the Roshi asked in mock surprise with raised eyebrows. "Why only sometimes?" "I...don't know," the student said. "Oh. Well, when you are not having fun, why is that?" asked the Roshi. "I...don't know," the student said. "Oh. Well, when you do have fun, what is happening?" "I...don't...know..." "Oh. Well then, how do you know if you are having fun or not?" "I...don't know..." "Oh. So then, what \*is\* 'fun'?" "I...don't know..." "Fun is what happens when you allow the natural expansiveness of bodily feeling, of seeing and hearing and so on to express themselves past your usual round of contractions. It is releasing structures of attention based upon configuring sets of knowings as a knower relative to knowns and releasing all of this into the Knowing in which they arise. It is not a matter of feeling good or of feeling bad but of feeling, of allowing whatever is present to point to the space it arises in. Good night."

The Lineage is always fresh in each moment that we wake up to this moment. Encountering ourselves through this wonderful practice, we meet who the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors were and are. Mindfulness of the moment can be very slippery because the moment is slippery. Sometimes we have to just let go of what we are holding onto, let ourselves slip and fall, and learn

how to stand up freely.

Have a good morning.

## Long Distance Training Program

White Wind Zen Community's Long-distance Training Program was established in 1995 to support the practice of students living more than an hour's commuting distance from Dainen-ji, the monastery founded by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi, located in Ottawa, Canada. Since that time, people living all over the world have joined the Sangha of students studying and practicing under the direction of Roshi's Lineage.

Students receiving instruction through the Long-distance Training Program receive initial instruction as “preliminary students” from the Practice Council to clarify their understanding of Zen practice prior to applying at the first category of enrolment as a “public associate student” (“public” indicates that they are training at a distance from the monastery). As and if they deepen their practice sufficiently, they can apply as a “public general student”, a “public probationary formal student” or a “public formal student”. It is possible for students practising at a distance to deepen their practice further by training as laymonks if they are able to come to Dainen-ji at least once or twice a year to receive face-to-face instruction and Transmission. Full monastic training requires full-time residential training in the monastery for a period of years.&nbsp;

## Formal Introduction to the Practice

The training provided to long-distance students is based on the structure and standards of training presented at Dainen-ji. Those living near the monastery begin practice by attending an Introduction to Zen Workshop. In order to provide those living at a distance with a similar introduction, they are asked to read the Beginner's Mind Workshop transcript. This is a transcript of an Introduction to Zen Practice Workshop presented by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi in 1991. It will provide you with some information about our practice and the style of presentation used. It is suggested that you read through the transcript two or three times. After you have read through the Beginner's Mind Workshop transcript, sit for 30 minutes, timed with a clock. If you are uncertain about how to arrange your posture, please read The Posture of Zazen.

## Establishing Contact

The practice of Zen is experiential and instruction is based on your actual experience of doing the

practice. As soon as possible after reading the transcript, sit for a full half hour and then fill out this form to let us know that you read the Beginner's Mind Workshop transcript, sat a 30-minute round of zazen, and would like to receive further instruction. Please include some detail concerning what you experienced while sitting and write out any questions that came up. Your answers will be read and replied to by a Dharma Teacher or practice advisor in residence at Dainen-ji and this will be the beginning of an exchange for the purpose of clarifying your understanding of Zen practice so that you can eventually apply as a public student of Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi's Lineage.&nbsp;

Please use this form.

### Enrolment

After corresponding for a period of time to clarify your understanding of the practice, the Teacher or practice advisor you are corresponding with will invite you to apply as a "public student" (a student who lives outside of commuting distance). The application process will be explained by email.

### Cost

There is no financial contribution expected for preliminary instruction (instruction received prior to applying as, and being accepted as a student), although any contributions are welcome. Once accepted there is the expectation that students will make a monthly financial contribution as they receive ongoing instruction and make more use of resources available. The Administrative Council posts information on suggested contributions.

### Commitment as a Public Student

Beginning students are required to sit a minimum of a full 30 minutes once a week, in order to receive instruction. We encourage everyone to sit every day, but the Roshi and Practice Council recognizes that people have many tasks and responsibilities and may not have time to do so and it is not a problem if they do not sit every day. But you must establish a minimum of a weekly half-hour sitting practice which we refer to as a "committed sitting". That half-hour committed sitting must take place on the same day of each week and at the same time. So, if you decide that your committed sitting will take place on Wednesday morning at 7:00, then it is every Wednesday morning at 7:00. We sit in 30 minute rounds (not more, not less) timed with a clock. If you decide that you wish to sit more than one round, please end the first round at 30 minutes and then do five or ten minutes of kinhin (slow walking) before beginning another round.

Ongoing instruction is provided by email. After completing your committed sitting each week, send a "practice journal" to the monastery, a written description of what you experienced while sitting. If you are using someone else's computer, please set up your own email account for this purpose as no one else should be reading correspondence between yourself and a Teacher or practice advisor.

### Resources for Public Students

## Weekly Newsletter

The "eMirror" is a free, electronic newsletter of the White Wind Zen Community, published in HTML format and emailed out every Friday. Each issue is illustrated and includes quotations from teisho and information about our schedule and activities. You can subscribe to the eMirror [here](#).

## Reading Materials

In addition to thousands of pages of text posted on this Website, there is a list of publications available through Great Matter Publications. "The Straight Path: Zen Teachings on the Foundations of Mindfulness" is recommended reading for beginning students.

## White Wind Media Site

Once accepted as a Sangha member, students are given a password to access the monastery Media Site, which contains a collection of thousands MP3 files of recorded Dharma Talks, teisho, readings and classes presented by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin, Dharma Talks presented by Teachers and Dharma Talks presented by practice advisors.

## Home Retreats

The format used for a home retreat is very similar to that used for retreats at the monastery, with instruction provided beforehand in how to structure the day and the use of forms

## Further Suggested Reading List

Beginner's Mind Workshop presented by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Entering the Gates of Practice by the Practice Council

The Posture of Zazen presented by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Begin Here: Five Styles of Zen presented by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

The Posture of Practice presented by Ven. Shikai Zuiko O-sensei

The Touchstone presented by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

## The Makyo of Me

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, January 30th, 2010

This room, the Hatto, or Dharma Hall, was once a living room for the Catholic monks who lived here. The first time I saw it in 1996, during a tour arranged by a real estate agent, it was a huge

room furnished with a grotty couch and big heavy so-called "easy" chairs, a coffee table and a bird cage. But it was huge, as was the rest of the building, so despite an initial impression of clutter and gloominess the potential to transform it into a monastery was immediately evident.

For a room to serve as a practice room, it needs to be as simple as possible. To most people, making a room 'simple' would be removing some of the clutter that seems unrelated to what they want to use the room for, and filling it up with all kinds of other clutter to personalize it. For us, making this room simple required a great deal of work to ensure that it was not 'personalized'. Every surface in this room was renovated. An acoustic tile ceiling was replaced with drywall; the walls were taken down to the brick and new walls were put up; the floor was refinished; the doors replaced; the windows simplified and repaired; a fireplace was removed; all of the molding was replaced and the lighting was changed. There is not a square inch of this room that is the same as it was. And the majority of this work was done by monastics with one intention in mind: to provide a room for practice that would be conducive to, and reflective of, the spaciousness, brightness and simplicity of our practice.

When you take your seat and the sitting round begins, you know what the instructions are and why you have been given them. First and foremost, stay in the room. Stay with the simplicity of reality. You're in a beautiful clean room. There is nothing going on that you need to do anything about. There is no one talking to you that you need to respond to. There is nothing you can do about anything while sitting on a zafu, so you don't need to think about anything. You can sit at ease in the open space of experiencing, and allow your attention to fall open to what actually is.

It would be so simple if you were to just do the practice. But human beings are addicted to clutter and not just the clutter of tea cups and nick-knacks and mementos because that clutter comes from the clutter of thoughts, feeling, and associations. Human beings are content junkies. Whenever there is any kind of open space, we want to fill it up as quickly as possible with as much stuff as possible. And so although everything is laid out for us to practice, and the instructions have been made clear over and over again, instead of staying with the simplicity of the practice, instead of 'staying in the room', the tendency is to want to clutter up and personalize the space by conjuring up all sorts of habitual thoughts and feelings and storylines. But, of course, concerning these illusions, the instructions are clear. You need to recognize when you are turning attention to this habitual clutter and release it. Really release it. As soon as you notice you are drifting, you need to gently, but firmly bring attention back to the breath and body and seeing and hearing. You need to do this moment-to-moment. It's not just posture of the body you are practising, it is posture of mind. Mind and body together, in the same place, at the same time.

Anyone who has sat zazen for any length of time will have experienced illusions traditionally called "makyo". I'll give you an obvious example of this:

When we are sitting zazen, we sit facing a blank white wall. There's nothing there to entertain yourself with, to watch, and there's certainly nothing to get tangled up in. But what you experience

as you sit gazing at the wall is going to depend on how you attend to the wall. If you are feeling the body sitting on the zafu, then you know very directly, very simply, that you are sitting on a zafu and there is a wall in front of you. If peripheral vision is open, then you know that the wall is more than the section of wall you are seeing directly in front of you, that the wall that extends up to the ceiling and down to the floor and also to the right and left. It doesn't require that much open attention to stay with the recognition of all of this - the recognition that you are just sitting and the wall is in front of you.

But if attention begins to narrow, your eye gaze will also tend to narrow. And when this happens, the expanse of the wall seems to disappear and all that remains is a small patch directly in front of your face. You're focusing attention in such a way as to make this small patch of wall in front of you seem inordinately important. If attention continues to narrow, this focusing on the wall will have much the same effect as looking at something through a magnifying glass. Details of the area of focus stand out, while the rest of the surface of the wall becomes insignificant. This is setting the stage for makyo, in a manner of speaking. It's not that different, really, from being a child lying in the grass looking up at the clouds, fascinated with the shapes the clouds form - faces and animals and structures of all sorts.

Similarly, gazing at a wall with narrowed and focused attention, markings on the wall will seem to stand out and take on characteristics of their own. Little striations in the plaster and paint, the unevenness of what previously appeared to be a fairly smooth wall will become more and more noticeable. A tiny streak in the paint next to a small fleck of plaster begin to look vaguely like a plant of some sort, maybe a tree. A rectangular shape in the plaster could be...a building. So now we have a building and a tree standing next to it. And as attention continues to narrow, other markings on the surface of the wall form themselves into avenues and other buildings, a train station, a tiny train with puffs of smoke rising above the engine.

And even more often the wall itself is ignored. What is actually being seen is ignored. Instead attention just inverts so far that day dreams and internalized imagery overcome actual vision and all of the rods and cones and optic nerves and neurons involved in light becoming colours and forms. Seeing is screened off and instead there is a screen on which projections are played out.

Now, I have given you just one small example of the form makyo can take. It can take on any appearance - cartoons, little Buddhas, birds, a Heinz ketchup bottle. The form that it takes, though, is not at all the point. The point is that the wall does not make this happen. You make it happen. And by the time it has taken on seemingly recognizable shapes, you've completely lost all recognition that you are just sitting on a cushion, facing a blank white wall. When this happens for practitioners, they are not feeling the breath or the body, they're not feeling the zafu they are sitting on or the contact of their legs and feet with the zabuton they are resting on; they are not seeing the whole expanse of the wall or hearing sounds in the room. The majority of their attention has become riveted on these scenes they are projecting onto the wall and for as long as the fascination with them continues, they will continue to propagate - to add to them.

Fortunately, anyone who has sat zazen for any length of time will also have seen through this because, of course, it's all bullshit. Well, unless you are not receiving instruction and are just playing out your own meditation trip. Then you might think your little visions are the basis of a new religion or messages from aliens or are showing you some hidden secrets about the machinery of the universe. But for us, that's not a problem. The wall is the wall. That's all. And any appearance of makyo simply indicates that attention has narrowed and focused, that this is causing distortion and one needs to re-initiate practice in order to release it. And that's a matter of coming back to the breath and the body and opening to peripheral vision to let go of the fascination with it.

Now this might sound harmless enough, and perhaps it would be if it were limited to conjuring up Daffy Duck on a wall. But if you can do that with a wall, you can also do it with thoughts and feelings. The same tendency to narrow and focus attention, to project and add your own interpretations to what you are experiencing can be just as convincing if you don't recognize what is going on. This is why, in the instructions given students for practice, so much emphasis is placed on opening to context.

By narrowing and focusing attention on a thought or a feeling, you lose context. The more you focus, the greater the distortion because by focusing on the thought or feeling, you are separating it from everything around it - the context in which it is arising. When you focus in that way, whatever you are focusing on will take on a disproportionate and often inappropriate enormity and importance that will lead to more and more complexity.

When it comes to interacting with other people, this can lead to a huge amount of contraction over what are often ridiculously trivial matters. Let's say someone does something you don't like. Maybe they make smacking noises with their mouth when they eat and it really bugs you and they've just done it again. Two choices present themselves right away. You could say something or you could not say something. If you are going to say something, you should say it as soon as possible. If you are not going to say anything, you should open around the irritation. Often in situations such as these, people won't say anything because they are afraid of upsetting the other person or of offending them, although they themselves feel offended. But if you do decide to say something and say it straight away, there won't be much force to what you say and chances are it won't be that big a deal. If you sit and mull it over for a time before saying anything, you've had time to accumulate some contraction around what you are saying and how you are saying it and that will make it more difficult for you to communicate in a simple, straightforward manner. If you don't say anything at all, but instead talk to yourself about it, you are focusing intently on this one event as though it were THE most important thing in the world and you can build up a state of resentment or petty peevishness using this small thing someone else does as justification for doing so.

Sometimes people do this to such an extent that they have almost no real interaction with other people. They internalize reactivity so continuously that all they are interacting with is their own

states and storylines about how the world is, or how other people are.

How is this a form of makyo? It is makyo because makyo is illusion. Instead of opening to and responding to the open space of experiencing around you, when you do this you are using forms and colours and sounds as a kind of surface on which you are projecting your own interpretations. By focusing intently on only a limited range of details, ignoring everything around them, and by internalizing this focusing, you can reduce the world to a series of irritating cartoons. You look at someone and something they did becomes everything about them.

This has come up from time to time even in the monastery. One of the monks may, for instance, say something to a student that the student takes exception to and instead of discussing it with the monastic who said it, at the time it is said, they will let it fester. They let their attention return to it again and again and again, turning it this way and that in their mind, rewinding, fast-forwarding past anything that doesn't fit the frame of irritation or resentment or whatever it is they've constructed around the memory of that interaction. Ohhh, it would have been so much simpler if they had simply said "I don't understand why you said that", or asked some questions about it. But instead, it is allowed to fester and they talk to themselves endlessly about it. It might be days or weeks or months or, in some instances, even years later that this might spill out in daisan and I find myself being asked to answer to or explain some story about some interaction that took place between this student and that monk, a story that now is so distorted and so laden with feeling tones that it makes no sense at all and there is little or nothing I can say about it. I wasn't even there in the first place and now, with so much time having passed, the monk in question won't even remember the interaction clearly. For the student, this event in memory is 30 feet high, weighs 600 pounds and is covered in spiked barbs. For the monk, at most it is the size of a nit and of no more importance.

How many times have you recognized that you were just a cartoon to the person that you were talking to? That you were being seen in a simplistic way that had nothing at all to do with your own intentions and actions and words? Too many to count. But have you recognized how many times that you have been speaking to your own cartoons of others?

Although people's own experiencing shows them that moment after moment they change, that their thoughts and feelings change, that they present themselves as different 'selves' in different situations, when a strong feeling tone or a storyline comes up, the identification with that feelingtone or storyline can consume so much attention that they will believe themselves to actually be that feelingtone or storyline. Propagating and viewing oneself and the world through a feeling of poverty or of being overwhelmed or of anger or irritation or feelings of self-loathing can so completely cover over reality that it becomes rather like a mile-high wall that nothing can penetrate. And yet even the Great Wall of China can be seen from space because there is only open space above it and all around it. It is only if you choose to cower behind it that you can convince yourself that it is so tall that no one can see you. But there never was any need to hide. It's all already exposed.

In "Entering Completely" which is a commentary on his translation of Bodhidharma's text "Two Entries and Four Practices", Zen Master Anzan Hoshin says:

Bodhidharma says, "The usual person, through basic ignorance, fixates on one thing and then another." This basic ignorance is the root of self-image, avidya, basic ignorance, ignoring the fact that one is already fundamentally free and pretending to be bound. In the midst of space, trying to carve out some territory, as if one could build walls out of the sheer air, as if one could tie knots in the air, nail clouds in place.

This tying of knots, this erecting of walls, this nailing things down, is this fixating on one thing and then another, grasping at thought, grasping at sounds and feelings, grasping at forms, and names. This is called craving.

And so the craving that we need to address in our practice is not just a matter of giving up our attachment to fashion or a beautiful house, a beautiful wife, a beautiful husband, beautiful children, a beautiful life in which there are no problems. Dropping that does not liberate, because all craving, all greed, all lust, all anger, are rooted in this fundamental strategy of self-image to contract and localize, to create boundaries within emptiness, to grasp at emptiness. And so we must understand this process of fixation as it arises, and it arises not in a beautiful house. It arises in this moment of seeing and hearing. It arises as mind moments display themselves, and as this display is interpreted to be self and other, time and space, body and mind. This is the craving that we must understand and release.

It's not that through practising we should all become good little boys and girls who never disagree with others or from time to time or think them an asshole. But to take one's own reactivity overly seriously, to fold down and obsess, to broadcast resentment or anger or states of poverty is completely unnecessary. To agree when you disagree, to agree to what you don't understand is pointless and childish. To rear up when you disagree is pointless and childish. You can and should bring up anything that you do not understand and you should ask questions and the sooner the better. But remember, as Joshu Dainen roshi said, to always question the questioner. Hear the tone of your voice when you speak. Feel your facial muscles. Notice if you are contracting and make the effort to open around it so that you can communicate clearly what it is that you want to say, not just your feelings about it.

Please understand that there is a direct relationship between the clutter of thoughts, feeling, and associations and the clutter of belongings you allow to accumulate all around you and your territoriality about them. And that there is a direct relationship between the clutter of thoughts, feeling, and associations and your ability to have open, equitable relationships and communicate clearly. And that there is a direct relationship between the clutter of thoughts, feeling, and associations and the territoriality that has given rise to every atrocity, every act of barbarism

perpetrated by human beings against one another. Do not reduce other beings to mere cartoons. They are not the images that arise in your mind.

All around each thing that is noticed, the rest of the world stands forth. When you see makyo on the wall and focus on it, the rest of the world is ignored and if you choose to focus in that manner, you are choosing to cut yourself off from the world. When you 'see' a thought or a feeling, the rest of the world stands forth around it. If you focus on it, the rest of the world and all of the information available to you is ignored and by choosing to focus in that manner you are cutting yourself off from the rest of the world and from your life as it actually is.

The treasury of this practice has been transmitted from Teacher to student for 2600 years so that right now, right here, you might put an end to the ways in which you make yourself suffer. This building, this room in which you sit today has been made available to you for this same reason. Please, do not use this opportunity to just continue to rehearse all of the usual ways in which you think about yourself and others and the world. Stay in the room. Stay with the colours and forms and sounds and sensations and practise releasing Daffy Duck.

#### Master List of Masters

a biographical concordance compiled by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
from the Teachings of Zen Master Anzan Hoshin

[Please note: This text is under continual construction. This version is current as of December, 2017.]

Ananda (Anan ), 6th Century B.C.E. The Second Indian Ancestor. Mahakasyapa's Dharma-heir. Sakyamuni Buddha's cousin, close disciple and personal attendant for twenty years. Ananda was known for his perfect recall and the sutras were all said to be recited by him after Sakyamuni's parinirvana. See Denkoroku Chapter 3.

Ashvagoshā (Anabotei), 1st-2nd Cent.? The Twelfth Indian Ancestor in the Zen tradition, two generations before Nagarjuna. Amongst texts uncertainly, though traditionally attributed to him are the early Mahayana classics, Mahayana Sraddhotpada sastra (The Awakening of Faith) and Fifty Verses on Attending to the Teacher (see the trans. by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi and Ven. Jinmyo Fleming, WWZC Archives, 1996). See Denkoroku Chapter 13.

Baling Haojian (Pa-ling Hao-chien, Haryo Kokan), 10th C. A Dharma heir of Yunmen Wenyan, He appears in Blue Cliff Records 13 and 100. See Rhythm and Song: Commentaries on Dongshan

Liangjie's Jewel Mirror Samadhi, WWZC Archives 1996. He had three turning words that he used to sum up the transmission: "What is the Path? A clear-eyed man falls into a well. What is the sword so sharp it can split hairs? Each branch of coral holds up the moon. What is the House of Kanadeva? Snow in a silver bowl." For further on the first phrase, see the Himitsu Shobogenzo, case 16, involving Sogaku Hakukaze and Anzan Daiko. See Dogen's Bukkyo.

Bai Juyi (Haku Kyoi; a.k.a. Bai Luoten, Haku Rakuten), 772-846 was the lay disciple of Zen Master Fokuang Ruman (Bukko Nyoman) n.d. who was a Dharma-heir of Zen Master Jiangxi Daji (a.k.a. Mazu Daoyi; Baso Doitsu). He also visited with Guizhong Zhichang and Daolin served as governor of Hangzhou. See Dogen's Shoaku Makusa. See Anzan Hoshin roshi's Doing Not-Doing.

Baizhang Huaihai (Pai-chang Huai-hai, Hyakujo Ekai), 720-814. Dazhi (Tao-chih, Daichi) is a posthumous title. A Dharma-heir of Mazu Daoyi. His Dharma-heirs include Guishan Lingyou and Huangbo. Baizhang is credited with having created the basis for the shingi or rules of deportment used today in Zen monasteries. He is the purported origin of the phrase, "A day without work is a day without food" ("One day not work, one day not eat"). His teachings and sayings have been translated in *The Zen Teaching of Huai-Hai on Sudden Illumination* by John Blofeld, Rider and Co., 1962 and *Sayings and Doings of Pai-Chang* by Thomas Cleary, Center Publications, 1978. Yunyan Tansheng studied with Baizhang for twenty years and left to go and study with Yaoshan after Baizhang's death on the advice of Daowu. He appears in *Blue Cliff Records* 26, 53, 70, 71, 72, 73 *Records of Serenity* 6, 8, *Gateless Gate* 2, 40, *Himitsu Shobogenzo* 18. See Dogen's *Shinjin Gakudo*, *Chiji Shingi*, *Gyoji*. See Anzan Hoshin roshi's *Turning the Wheel of the Way* and *Medicine Mountain: The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyan*.

Baizhao Zhiyuan (Pai-chao Chih-yuan, Hakucho Shien), 9th C. Possibly the former teacher of Baoen Xuanze before Fayen known as Qingfeng (Ch'ing-feng, Seiho). He appears in Dogen's *Bendowa*.

Baoen Xuanze (Pao-en Hsuan-tse, Hoon Gensoku), 9th-10th Century. A Dharma-heir of Fayen. He appears in Dogen's *Bendowa*.

Baofu Benquan (Pao-fu Pen-ch'uan, Hofuku Hongron), n.d. A Dharma-heir of [Huanglong] Huitang Zuxin. Not to be confused with Baofu Conzan who appears frequently in the *Blue Cliff Records*. See Dogen's *Bukkojoji*.

Baofu Congzan (Pao-fu Ts'ung-chan, Hofuku Juten), d. 928. A Dharma-heir of Xuefeng Yicun. Baofu had twenty-six heirs. He appears in *Blue Cliff Records* 8, 23, 76, 91, 95 and *Records of Serenity* 71, and *Eihei Koroku* 8.14. Not to be confused with Baofu Benquan.

Baoji [Huayan] Xiujing (Pao-chi Hua-yen Hsiu-ching Hoji [Kegon] Kyujo), 11th Century. A Dharma-heir of Dongshan Liangjie, the founder of Caodong/Soto Zen. See Dogen's *Chiji Shingi*.

Baoming Renyong (Pao-ming Jen-yung, Honei Ninyu), 11th Century. A Dharma-heir of Yangqi Fanghui, the founder of one of the two main branches of Rinzai Zen.

Baozhi (Pao-chih, Shiko), d. 514. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 1 and 67.

Beiyang Mingzhe (Peiyen Ming-che, Hokugan Myotetsu), n.d. Dharma-heir of Yaoshan Weiyang. See Sanbyakusoku case 220 and Donshan yulu 22.

Beiyuan Tong Juetou (Pei-yüan T'ung Chueh-t'ou), n.d. A Dharma-heir of Dongshan Liangjie.

Biandan Xiaoliao (Pien-tan Hsiao-liao, Hentan Goryo), 7-8th C. Dharma-heir of Huineng. See Dogen's Gyoji.

Bimo Yan (Pi-mo Yen), n.d. A devotee of Manjusri who lived on Wutai shan. He appears in Dogen's Sanbyakusoku Shobogenzo case 73.

Bodhidharma (Putidamo, &nbsp;Bodaidaruma [Damo, Daruma ]), d. 532. He is considered Twenty-Eighth in the Indian Lineage from Sakyamuni, and the First Chinese Ancestor. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 1, the Records of Serenity 2. See Dogen's Katto, Soshi-sairai-no-I, Gyoji. See Denkoroku Chapter 29. See the teisho series Bodhidharma's Eyes (October through December 2000) for an extensive consideration of the history, legends, and various koan associated with Bodhidharma. Also see Anzan Hoshin roshi's Turning the Wheel of the Way.

Butsuji Myozen. See Myozen Ryonen.&nbsp;

Caoshan Benji (Ts'ao-shan Pen-chi, Sozan Honjaku), 840-901. Dharma-heir of Dongshan Liangjie and sometimes considered the co-founder of the Caodong (Soto) House, he developed the Five Degrees Teachings. Appears in Records of Serenity 52, 67 C, 73, 87 C, 98 C, Gateless Gate 10. See Dogen's Kai-in Zanmai, Chiji Shingi. See One Taste: Commentaries on Dogen zenji's Kai-in Zanmai, WWZC Archives, 1995; Medicine Mountain: The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyang; and The Lineage of Luminosity: Dongshan's Continuing Lineage Part 1.

Changsha Jingcen [Zhaoxien] (Ch'ang-sha Ching-t'sen [Chao-hsien], Chosa Keishin), d. 868 A Dharma-heir of Nanquan Puyuan and Dharma-brother of Zhaozhou Congren. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 36 and Records of Serenity 79. See Dogen's Komyo, Yuibutsu Yobutsu, and Jippo.

Changlu Zongze&nbsp;&nbsp; (Ch'ang-lu Tsung-tse; Choro Sosaku), d. 12th Century. A master in the Yunmen Lineage. In 1103 he compiled the Chanyuan Qinggui, Zen'en Shingi (Zen Monastic Standards), the model for Dogen's Eihei Shingi. See Cooking Zen, Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi, Great Matter Publications, 1995.

Changqing Da'an (Ch'ang-ch'ing Ta-an, Chokey Daian), 793-883. His posthumous name was Yuanzhi (Enchi). Also called Guishan Da'an. A Dharma-heir of Baizhang Huaihai, he succeeded his Dharma-brother Guishan Lingyou's abbacy on Dagui shan. Not to be confused with Changqing Huileng. He appears in Dogen's Kajo, Gyoji. See Anzan Hoshin roshi's Turning the Wheel of the Way.

Changqing Huileng (Ch'ang-ch'ing Hui-leng, Chokey Eryo), 854-932. A posthumous name was Chaojue. A Dharma-heir of Xuefeng Yicun, he himself had twenty-six Dharma-heirs. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 8, 22, 23, 74, 76, 93. See Dogen's Gyoji.

Chenzao (Ch'en-ts'ao, Chinso), n.d. A civil official, ministry president. He studied with Muzhou Daoming, a Dharma-heir to Huangbo. Thus he was a Dharma-brother to Yunmen. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 33 and Dongshan yulu 70.&nbsp;

Chengjin (Ch'eng-chin, Seishin), 2nd Century. Governor of Nanyang during the reign of the later Han dynasty eleventh emperor. See Dogen's Chiji Shingi.

Chen Xiuwen (Ch'en Hsiu-wen, Chin Kyubun). A Liang dynasty poet. 441-513. See Dogen's Chiji Shingi.

Chuanzi Decheng (Chuan-tzu Te-ch'eng, Sensu Tokujo), 8-9 C. A Dharma-heir of Yaoshan Weiyang, a Dharma-brother to Yunyan Tansheng. Nicknamed "the boatman," he lived as a ferryman after the persecution of Buddhism in 842 in seclusion at Huating on the bank of the Wu river (near modern Shanghai). After transmitting the Dharma to Jiashan Shanhui, he overturned the boat and disappeared in the water. See Dogen's Sansui kyo, Chiji Shingi.&nbsp;The Denkoroku quotes this verse of his:

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp;There should be no traces where you dwell  
&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp;but you should not dwell where there are no traces.  
&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp;After thirty years with my Master Yaoshan  
&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp;this one thing is what I understand.  
&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp;Total purity does not hide the body.

Cihu Lizong (Tzu-hu Li-tsung, Shiko Risho), roughly 800-880. A Dharma-heir of Nanquan Puyuan. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 17 and 96.

[Ciming] Shishuang Chuyuan ([Tz'u-ming] Shih-shuang Ch'u-yuan; [Jimyo] Sekiso Soen) 986-1039. Not to be confused with Dongshan's Dharma-brother Shishuang Qingzhu. Student of Fenyeng Shanzhao and teacher of both Yangqi and Huanglong, founders of the two main branches of Linji/Rinzai Zen. Ciming taught at Shishuang Mountain, the temple established by Shishuang Qingzhu. He appears in Gateless Gate 46. See Dogen's Chiji Shingi.

Cuiwei Wuxue (Ts'ui-wei Wu-hsueh, Suibi Mugaku), 9th C. A Dharma-heir of Danxia Tianran, gave Transmission to Touzi Datong. Yunju Daoying studied with him before he came to Dongshan Liangjie. Very little is recorded about this Teacher. His temple was located on Mt. Chungnan in Changan. The Jingde Chuandeng-lu records his awakening under Danxia Tianran (Tan-hsia T'ien-jan, Tanka Tennen), 738-824, as follows:

The Master (Cuiwei ) asked Danxia, "What is the Teacher of all the Buddhas?"

Danxia scolded him, "Look, you're all right on your own. What are you doing going around holding on to a wiping cloth?"

(The wiping cloth means that Cuiwei is holding on to some idea about keeping the mirror of mind clean and so is still separate from it.)

The Master took three steps back.

Danxia yelled, "Wrong!"

The Master stepped forward.

Danxia yelled, "Wrong! Wrong!"

The Master lifted his leg, swivelled around and went off.

Danxia said, "That's better but you're turning away from all those Buddhas."

Hearing this, the Master realized the essence.

He appears in Blue Cliff Records 20 which is also Records of Serenity 80.

Cuiyan (Ts'ui-yen Ling-ts'an, Suigan Reisan), 9th-10th C. A Dharma-heir of Xuefeng Yicun. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 8 and in Wansong's commentary to Records of Serenity 69.

Daci Huanzhong (Ta-ch'ih Huan-chung, Daiji Kanchu), 732-824. A Dharma-heir of Baizhang. A posthumous title was Xingkong. He appears in Sanbyakuspku 77 and Gyoji 1 and also in Tetteki tsui (Iron Flute) 15 which adds a comment by Dongshan: Daci said to the assembly, "Monks, it is better to dig deeply one foot than to spread the Dharma outwardly ten feet. Your deep cultivation of one inch is better than your preaching of ten inches." In order to balance and clarify this statement, Dongshan said, "I Teach what cannot be practised, and I practise what I cannot Teach." Naturally this also appears in the Dongshan yulu section 109.

Dadian Baotong (Ta-tien Pao-t'ung, Daiten Hotsu), d. 819. A Dharma-heir of Shitou Xiqian. Shanping Yizhong was his Dharma-heir. His Lineage died out after a few generations. See Dogen's Gyoji. See Anzan Hoshin roshi's Turning the Wheel of the Way for a great deal on Dadian.

Dahui Zonggao (Ta-hui Tsung-kaio, Daie Soko), 1089-1163. Dharma-heir of Yuanwu Keqin (compiler of the Blue Cliff Records) in the Linji Lineage. Famous proponent of koan introspection and huado koan practice and critic of silent illumination meditation. Attempted to popularize Chan through simplifying the practice into concentrating on "Wu" (Mu). In some writings Dogen used him as a symbol of misunderstandings of practice. Tremendously influential for the Korean Son/Hwaom master Pojo Chinul. See Anzan Hoshin roshi's teisho "Zhenxie and

Silent Illumination" in The Lineage of Luminosity Part 2, Commentaries on Keizan Jokin zenji's Denkoroku.

Dainichi Nonin , n.d., circa mid 1100s. A Dharma-heir by "correspondence" with Zhuón Dégung (, 1121-1203) He "received" Transmission by sending two of his students to China to look for a Chan Master willing to do this &nbsp;A Tendai monk who founded the Daruma-shu based upon his reading of Zen texts. Koun Ejo and Tettsu Gikai and many other of Dogen's monastic community were originally members of the Daruma-shu. See Anzan Hoshin roshi's Vines Entwined.

Daixiao Lingtao (Tai-hsiao Ling-t'ao, Daigyo Reito), 666-760. A disciple of the Sixth Ancestor who later cared for the Sixth Ancestor's memorial stupa and mummy. When a Korean monk tried to cut off and steal the head of the mummy was apprehended, Daixiao encouraged forgiveness and leniency by the authorities. See Dogen's Shuryo Shingi.

Daixue Hualian (Tai-Hsueh Huai-lien, Daigaku Eren), 1109-90. In the Yunmen Lineage.

Dajian Huineng (Ta-chien Hui-neng, Daikan Eno), 638-713. Also known as Caoxi (T'sao-chi, Sokei). The Thirty-Fourth Ancestor, the Sixth Chinese Ancestor. He appears in Records of Serenity 13 and in Gateless Gate 29. See Dogen's Chiji Shingi, Shisho, Gyoji, Hokke-ten-hokke, Kobutsu-shin. See Denkoroku Chapter 34. See Anzan Hoshin roshi's Turning the Wheel of the Way.

Daman Hongren (Ta-men Hung-jen, Daimen Konin), 601-74. The Thirty-Third Ancestor, the Fifth Chinese Ancestor. He taught at Pingmao shan, also known as Dongshan (East Mountain) and so his stream of the Lineage was known as the East Mountain stream of Chan while Daoxin's parallel transmission to Farong was called the Niutou or Oxhead stream. Later, the mountain was renamed Wuzu shan (Fifth Ancestor Mountain). See Denkoroku, Chapter 34.

Damei Fachang (Ta-mei Fa-ch'ang, Daibaijo zenjo or Daibai Hojo), 752-839. A Dharma-heir of Mazu Daoyi. He gave transmission to Hangzhou Tianlong. He practiced in hermitage on Damei-shan (Great Plum Mountain) in Ningbo for forty years before founding Husheng zi where he became the teacher of a monastic community of 600. He appears in Gateless Gate 30. See Dogen's Gyoji, Shisho.

Danyuan Yingzhen (Tan-yuan Ying-chen, Tangen Oshin), 8th-9th C. A Dharma-heir of the National Teacher Nanyang Huizhong. He Transmitted a set of ninety-seven mandalas to Yangshan Huiji, co-founder of the Guiyang school. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 18, Records of Serenity 85 and Gateless Gate 17.

Danxia Tianran &nbsp;(Tan-hsia T'ien-jan, Tanka Tennen),739-824. A Dharma-heir of Shitou Xiqian. His Dharma-heir was Cuiwei Wuxue and his second-generation successor was Touzi Datong. His Lineage died out after a few generations. Originally he was a student of Mazu who



Dazu Huike (T'ai-tsu Hui-k'o, Taiso Eka), 487-593. The Second Chinese Ancestor. A posthumous title was Zhengzong Pujue (Cheng-tsung P'u-chueh, Shoshu Fukaku) See Denkoroku, Chapters 29 and 30. See Dogen's Katto, Gyoji.

Dazheng Chanshi. See Nanyang Huizhong.

Deshan Xuanjian (Te-shan Hsuan-chien, Tokusan Senkan), ca. 781-867. A Dharma-heir of Longtan Chongxin. He gave transmission to Yantou Quanho and Xuefeng Yicun. Famous for "Thirty blows if yes, thirty blows if no." He appears in Blue Cliff Records 4, Records of Serenity 14, 22, 46, 55, and Gateless Gate 13 and 28. He appears in the Sayings and Doings of Dongshan (Dongshan yulu) 37, 54, 56, 83. Previously a lecturer on the Diamond Sutra, he burnt his books after being awakened to Chan by an old woman selling teacakes. See Dogen's Shinfukatoku.

Devadatta, &nbsp;, (Daibadatta ) 6th Century B.C.E. Sakyamuni Buddha's cousin, who after joining his order tried to become his rival and even tried to have the Buddha killed. He appears in Records of Serenity 5.

Dhritaka (Daitaka ), n.d. The Fifth Indian Ancestor. See Denkoroku Chapter 6.

Ding shangzuo (Ting shang-tso, Jo joza or Elder Ding), n.d. Appears in Blue Cliff Records 32.

Dingshan Shenying (Ting-shan Shen-ying, Jozan Shin'ei), 771-853. Dharma-heir of Guishan Lingyou.

Dingzhou Shizang (Ting-chou Shih-tsang, Joshu Sekiso), 714-800. A contemporary of Mazu. He is mentioned in Blue Cliff Records case 75.

Dizang Guichen (Ti-ts'ang Kuei-ch'in, Jizo-in Shino), 869-928. Also called Luohan Guichen (Lo-han Kuei-ch'en, Rakan Keichin). He studied with Xuefeng Yicun but awoke under Xuefeng's heir Xuansha Shibe. Gave Transmission to Fayen Wenyi. Xuansha is said to have passed to him Mikkyo Teachings and samaya who then passed these to Fayen. He appears in Records of Serenity 12, 20, 64, Sanbyakasoku Shobogenzo case 112 and Eihei Koroku 8.15.

Dogen : See Eihei Dogen.

Dongkeng Yanjun (Tung-k'eng Yen-chun, Tonkin Genshun), 882-966. A Dharma-heir of Touzi Datong, who was two generations after Danxia Tianran, a student of Shitou.

Dongshan Liangjie (Tung-shan Liang-chieh; Tozan Ryokai), 807-869. Dharma-heir of Yunyan Tansheng. Wuben (Wu-pen, Gohon) is a posthumous title. Gave Transmission to Yunju Daoying. Appears in Blue Cliff Records Case 43, Records of Serenity 22, 49, 56, 89, 94, 98. See Denkoroku Chapter 39. See Dogen's Gyoji. See also the teisho series by Anzan Hoshin roshi Rhythm and

Song: Commentaries on the Hokyo Zanmai and Medicine Mountain: The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan.

Dongshan Shouchu (Tung-shan Shou-ch'u, Tozan Shusho), 910-90. A disciple of Yunmen cited by Dogen as a model tenzo. Appears in Blue Cliff Records 12, Gateless Gate 15, 18 (BCR 12 is identical to GG 18), a verse of his was used by Wumen in 37. See Cooking Zen.

Eihei Dogen zenji ; Dogen Kigen , Bussho-dento kokushi, Koso Joyo daishi (1200-1253) Founder of the Japanese Soto Zen Lineage. Founder of Eihei-ji monastery. Author of the Shobogenzo and Eihei Shingi. Originally received ordination as a Tendai monk on Heiei-san at the age of 13. There he studied shi-kan, goma, Mikkyo. After studying briefly with the syncretic Tendai/Zen Master Yosai (Eisai), following Yosai's death he studied with and became the Dharma-heir of Myozen, Yosai's successor. In 1223 Myozen and Dogen travelled to China. Myozen died there. Dogen studied with Rujing and received Transmission in the Caodong Lineage at Tiantong-shan. He returned to Japan in 1227 and stayed for a time at Kennin-ji, Myozen's temple, and later at Kannon-dori-in where he established the first Zen Sodo in Japan, Kosho-Horin-ji. After several threats and attacks from Tendai and Shingon monks following his Raihai Tokuzui Teaching on freedom from gender bias and several other incidents upsetting to them he moved to Echizen province. There he and his monks stayed with Tendai monks of the Hakusan line while a new monastery, Daibutsu-ji (soon renamed Eihei-ji) was being built. Dogen's radical Transmission of the saijo (easy and perfect) practice and his recorded Teachings are the basis of all Soto Teachings. Anzan Hoshin roshi's Teachings are intimately interlaced at every point with Dogen's.

Eisai . See Myoan Eisai.

Enni Ben'en (; 1202-1280) was a Japanese Buddhist monk in the Lineage of Myoan Yosai who studied various forms of forms of Mahayana under the Rinzai teacher Wuzhun Shifan in China. When he returned to Japan in 1241, he founded Tofuku-ji monastery under the patronage of Kujo Michiie in Kyoto in 1243, and practiced zazen as well as other types of Buddhism. His disciples included Muj Doko. It is believed that he was the first to bring udon noodles to Japan from China. See "Drawn In, Moving Forth".

Fayan Wenyi (Fa-yen Wen-i, Hogen Buneki), 885-958. Dharma-heir of Dizeng (Luohan) Guichen in the Lineage of Xuansha Shibe. Founder of the Fayan-zong which died out after five generations. He had sixty-three Dharma-heirs. He was profoundly influenced by the Avatamsaka sutra and had received Mikkyo Teachings from Dizang. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 7, Records of Serenity 17, 20, 27, 51, 64, 74, and Gateless Gate 26 and in Dogen's Bendowa.

Fazheng Niepan (Fa-cheng Nieh-p'an also Baizhang Niepan, Hyakujo Nehan), n.d. A Dharma-brother under Mazu along with Baizhang Huaihai and Nanquan. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 28.

Fengxue Yanzhao (Feng-hsueh Yen-chao, Fuketsu Ensho), 896-973. Three generations after Linji and a Dharma-heir of Nanyuan Huiyong. All the subsequent Linji tradition descends from his Lineage, as supposedly predicted by Yangshan. Teacher of Shoushan Xingnian. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 38, 61, Records of Serenity 29, 34 and Gateless Gate 24. See Dogen's Yuibutsu Yobutsu.

Fenyang Shanzhao (Fen-yang Shan-chao, Funyo Zensho) 947-1024. Gave Transmission to Ciming Quyuan and is thus the Ancestor of all surviving Linji Lineages. He only had seven students. Fenyang was the first master to add verse commentaries to the old stories or koan. A student of the Caodong Lineage before receiving the Linji transmission from his teacher Shoushan Xingnian, Fenyang introduced the Caodong Five Degrees Teaching into the Linji tradition.

Foyan Qingyuan (Fo-yen Ch'ing-yuan, Butsugen Seion), 1067-1120. Student of Wuzu Fayan and teacher of Zhu'an Shigui.

Fu Dashi (Fu Ta-shih, Fu Daishi), 497-569. Fu Dashi was a very popular lay practitioner who lived around the time of Bodhidharma. He is said to have created rotating sutra shelves so images of him are often found near Chinese sutra libraries. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 67. Here is a poem from the Zenne Fu Daishi goroku:

&nbsp; &nbsp; Every night, go to sleep together with Buddha.  
&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; Each morning, arise together with Buddha  
&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; Moving or still, actions mirror each other.  
&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; Sitting, sleeping, both abide in the same place.  
&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; Never apart even by a hair's breadth,  
&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; Like body and shadow, one with the other.  
&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; If you wish to know where this Buddha is,  
&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; Just say the word, and there the Buddha is,&nbsp;  
&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; in the sound of your own voice.

Furong Daokai (Fu-jung Tao-kai, Fuyu Dokai), 1043-1118. Dharma-heir of Touzi Yiqing. See Denkoroku Chapter 46. Although Dogen sometimes refers to him as Dayang, he is more commonly known by the name Furong. Dayang and later Furong are both places he taught. Furong was particularly known for revitalizing the monastic standards of the Caodong/Soto Lineage. Dogen particularly praises him for vehemently refusing the imperial offer of extravagant robes and imperial honours that caused him to undergo a period of exile. His phrase "Green mountains are always walking" is used as a pivot point in Dogen's Sansui kyo. See also Gyoji, Kago, and Shisho.

Furong Lingxun (Fu-jung, Ling-hsun, Fuyo Reikun), 1043-1118. A posthumous name is Hongzhao. Dharma-heir of Guizong Zhichang. Taught at Mt. Furong (Fujian). He gave Xuansha Shibe the tonsure. See Dogen's Gyoji.

Fushan Fayuan (Fu-shan Fa-yuan, Fusan Hoen), 991-1067. Dharma-heir of Shexian Guisheng, despite having been previously expelled from his assembly. He also saved the Caodong Lineage from extinction when Dayang Qingxuan was going to die without a Dharma-heir. Fushan was in complete accord with Dayang, but was unwilling to take on the responsibility of publicly proclaiming the Caodong style in addition to his Linji Lineage from Guisheng. However, he was able later to transmit the Soto Lineage from Dayang to his own student, Touzi Yiqing. See Denkoroku Chapters 44, 45.

Fuzhao Dequang (Fu-chao Te-kuang, Bussho Tokko), 1121-1203. Dharma-heir of Dahui Zonggao in the Linji Lineage. Gave Transmission to Dainichi Nonin of the Daruma-shu in 1189 when asked to do so by two of Nonin's students who had travelled to China.&nbsp;

Gaoan Dayu (Kao-an Ta-yu, Koan Daigu), c. 9th C. Two generations after Mazu Dao-i, he was the Dharma-heir of Guizhong Zhichang, the teacher of Moshan, and also was one of Linji's teachers. He appears in Records of Serenity 86. See the Linji Yulu (Rinzai roku). See Dogen's Raihai Tokuzui and Gyoji.

Gento Sokuchu, 1729-1807. Fiftieth abbot of Eihei-ji, he published the popular Rufubon edition of the Eihei Shingji in 1794. Also compiled a major edition of the Shobogenzo.

Gesshu Soko, 1618-96. Teacher of Manzan Dohaku. Soto Zen reformer who brought attention to Dogen's writings.

Guanzhi Zhixian&nbsp;&nbsp; (Kuan-chih Chih-Hsien, Kankei Shikan), d. 895. Considered a Dharma-heir of Linji, Guanzhi also studied under and venerated the nun, Moshan Laoran. See Dogen's Rahai Tokuzui.&nbsp;

He appears in Chingde Chuandenglou section 12 and Yuanwu presents this story in his commentaries on Xuedou's verse to Blue Cliff Records case 52. A travelling monk asked Guanxi (Flowing Mountain Stream), "I've heard about Guanxi for a long time. Now that I get here, I only see a pond for soaking hemp." Guanxi said, "You only see the hemp soaking pond. You don't see the flowing mountain stream." The monk asked, "What is the flowing mountain stream?" Guanxi said, "The arrow whistles past fast."

Guifeng Zongmi (Kuei-feng Tsung-mi, Keiho Shumitsu) 780-841. A Chan Master of Shenhui's early Heze school and Fifth Ancestor of the Chinese Huayan school.

Guishan Huaixiu&nbsp;&nbsp; (Kuei-shan Huai-hsiu, Isan Eshu), 11th Century. Became a successor of Huanglong Huinan.

Guishan Lingyou (Kuei-shan Ling-yu, Isan Reiyu), 771-853. Also called Weishan Lingyou and Daiwei (Daigu). A Dharma-heir of Baizhang. Gave transmission to Lingyou Zhixian. Dongshan

Liangjie studied with him for a time. The founder, along with his disciple, Yangshan Huiji, of one of the five Lineages of classical Chinese Zen Buddhism, the Guiyang house (Igyo in Japanese) which Transmitted ninety-seven mandalas and merged into the Linji House in the 10th century. Guishan's Admonitions is an early warning against laxity in the Zen community. Praised by Dogen as a former tenzo, he is referred to frequently in the Eihei Shingi. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 4, 24, 70, Records of Serenity 15, 37, 60, 83, 87, and Gateless Gate 40. He appears in the Sayings and Doings of Dongshan (Dongshan yulu) section 3. See Dogen's Tenzo kyokun in Cooking Zen, Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi, Great Matter Publications, 1995 for numerous references to Guishan. See also Dogen's Shisho, Gyoji.

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; In Tenzo kyokun, Dogen refers to this story from Chanlin Leiju Chapter 14: When Guishan Lingyou lived on Baizhang shan he went off into the wilderness with his master, Baizhang Huihai, to work. Baizhang said, "Bring me some fire." Guishan replied, "Okay, right away." When Guishan returned he brought a stick to Baizhang who said, "Well, where is it?" Guishan turned the stick around in his hand, blew on it three times, and handed it back to Baizhang. Baizhang accepted the stick.

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; Also to this story in the Jingde Chuandenglou: Once when Daigu was training as tenzo on Baizhang shan, he went to serve the master. Baizhang called out, "Who is it?" Daigui answered, "Me, Lingyou." Baizhang said, "Go and stir up those coals and see if anything's burning." Daigui did as instructed and when he returned told Baizhang that the fire was out. Baizhang got up, went to the brazier himself and stirred the ashes. Uncovering a small ember he brought it over to Daigui and said, "Well, what do you call this?" Daigui suddenly realized Baizhang's pointing-out instructions and bowed.

Guyun Daoquan (Ku-yun Tao-ch'uan, Koun Dogon), 13th Century. Disciple of Zhuoan Deguang.

Guanqi Zhihxian (Kuan-ch'i Chih-hsien, Kankei Shikan), d. 895.

Haihui [Baiyun] Shouduan (Hai-hui Pai-yun Shou-tuan, Kai-e [Haku'un] Shutan), 1025-1072. Primary Dharma-heir of Yangqi Fanghui and teacher of Wuzu Fayan.

Hangzhou Tianlong (Hang-chou T'ien-lung, Koshu Tenryuo), n.d. 9th C. A Dharma-heir of Damei Fachang. Gave Transmission to Juzhi. He appears in Gateless Gate 3. See Dogen's Gyoji.

Hanshan (Han-shan, Kanzan), 7th C. Cold Mountain. A hermit poet who lived in the Tiantai range of mountains. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 34 and Records of Serenity 3.

Heze Shenhui (Ho-tse Shen-hui, Katakaku Jinne), 670-762. A Dharma-heir of Huineng, he put himself forward as the Seventh Ancestor in China and accused Shenxiu as an usurper of the title of Sixth Ancestor.&nbsp;

Hongzhi Zhengjue (Hung-chih Cheng-chueh, Wanshi Shokaku), 1091-1157. Also called Tiantong Hongzhi, having been abbot at the Tiantong monastery where Dogen's master Tiantong Rujing

later taught, Hongzhi was the most influential Chinese Soto teacher in the century before Dogen. The Records of Serenity were compiled by Wansong Xingxie around one hundred cases that he had selected and provided capping verses for. See Dogen's Zazenshin, Gyoji.

Hoshan Wuyin (Ho-shan Wu-yin, Kazan Muin), d. 960. A Dharma-heir of Jiufeng Daoqian. Studied with Xuefeng until his death. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 44.

Hualin Shanjue (Hua-lin Shan-chueh, Karin Zenkaku), n.d. A Dharma-heir of Mazu, defeated in Dharma combat by Guishan while they served in Baizhang's assembly. Later he became abbot at Hualin (his name after that). He once was asked by Prime Minister Pei Xiugong if he had any attendants. Hualin called out the names "large Emptiness" and "Small Emptiness" and two tigers appeared. When Pei Xiugong became frightened, Hualin asked the tigers to leave for a while. They roared and departed.

Huangbo Xiyun (Huang-po I-ts'un, Obaku Kiyun), c. 9th C. A Dharma-heir of Baizhang Huaihai. He gave Transmission to Linji Yicun. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 11, Records of Serenity 53, 86, 96, and in Gateless Gate 2. See Dogen's Gyoji.

Huanglong Huinan (Huang-lung Hui-nan, Oryo Enan), 1002-1069. A Dharma-heir of Ciming Quyuan and teacher of Huitang Zuxin. Huanglong is considered the founder of the Huanglong stream of the Linji Lineage that was later brought to Japan by Yosai (Eisai).

Huayan Xiuqing (Hua-yen Hsiu-ching, Kegon Kyujo), n.d. 9th CE. Dharma-heir of Dongshan Liangjie. Also known as Jingzhao and a posthumous epithet Baozhi. He taught at Huayan Monastery in Jingzhao (Shanxi). See the Dongshan yulu. Wudeng Huiyuan 13.244a-b (Five Lamps Gathered at the Source): "A disciple asked, 'What if our great army presents sacrificial offerings to the King of Heaven, asking that it be victorious in battle, and the enemy army does the same, asking that it be the victor, which request will the King of heaven honor?' The master replied, 'When Heaven sends down rain and dew, it does not choose between lush and withered plants.'"

Huike . See Dazu Huike.

Huineng . See Dajian Huineng.

Huoan Shiti (Huo-an Shih-t'i, Wakuan Shitai), 1108-1179. A Dharma-heir of Huguo Jingyuan (n.d.), thus grandson in Dharma of Yuanwu Keqin, the editor of Hekiganroku. He appears in Gateless Gate 4. See the Bodhidharma's Eyes series, teisho 12.

[Huanglong] Huitang Zuxin (Hui-t'ang Tsu-hsin; [Oryu] Maida Soshin), 1025-1100. Dharma-heir of Huanglong Huinan. Huitang taught by raising a fist and saying "If you call this a fist you've said too much. If you say it's not a fist you do not hit the mark."

Huizhao: See Linji Yixuan.&nbsp;

"Iron Grindstone" Lu (Ryutetsuma), n.d. She appears in Blue Cliff Records 17, 24 Records of Serenity 60.

Jakuen The Japanese name by which Tiantong Rujing's student Jìyuán (1207 – 8 October 1299) is better known. In 1228 he went to Japan to help his friend Dogen establish the Way there. He eventually received Dharma Transmission from Dogen's heir Koun Ejo. he built a monastery called Hky-ji ( ) in the style of Tintóng, which today owns the only surviving early treasures of Eihei-ji.

[Jiangxi] Mazu Daoyi ([Chiang-hsi] Ma-tsu Tao-i, Baso Doitsu) 709-788. He was the sole Dharma-heir of Nanyue Huairang. Amongst his 139 Dharma-heirs was Baizhang Huaihai. He was one of the most prominent of the Tang Chan masters and had a great deal to do with shaping the directness of Teaching styles through his use of the shout, stick, and glare. His sayings and doings are collected in the Jiangxi Daoyi Chan-shi yu-lu (Kiangsi Tao-i ch'an-shih yu-lu, Recorded Sayings of Ch'an master Daoyi of Jiangxi). He appears in Blue Cliff Records 3, 53, 73, Records of Serenity 6, 36, 90 and Gateless Gate 30, 33. He appears in the Sayings and Doings of Dongshan (Dongshan yulu) 2. See Dogen's Uji, Koku, Hossho, Gyoji. Also see Medicine Mountain: The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyan.

Jiashan Shanhui (Chia-shan Shan-hui, Kassan Zen'e), 805-881. Dharma-heir of Chuanzi Decheng who was the heir of Yaoshan. See Mountains and Rivers, Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi, Great Matter Publications, 1991. Denkoroku Chapter 22 quotes this verse:

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp;Clearly there is nothing which is enlightenment.

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp;The doctrine of enlightenment just deludes beings.

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp;I just stretch out my legs and snooze.

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp;There is nothing false and nothing real.

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp;This is the essence of the Way.

Jianyuan Zhongxing (Chien-yuan Chung-hsing, Zengen Chuko), n.d. Considered a Dharma-heir of Daowu Yuanzhi. He realized the Dharma while he was tenzo on hearing a child recite the Kannon-gyo from the Lotus sutra. He appears in Jingde Chuandenglü 11. See Dogen's Kobutsu-shin.

Jianzhi Sengcan (Chien-shih Seng-ts'an, Kanchi Sosan), d. 606. The Third Chinese Ancestor. See Denkoroku Chapter 31.

Jingqing Daofu&nbsp; (Ching-ch'ing Tao-fu, Kyosei Kyosho Dofu) 863/68 - 937. Student and Dharma-heir of Xuefeng Yicun. Jingqing Daofu had five Dharma successors. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 16, 23 and 46, Sanbyakusoku Shobogenzo Case 39. Mentioned in Dogen's Gyoji.

Jingzhao Mihu (Ching-chao Mi-hu, Keicho Beiyu), n.d. A Dharma-heir of Guishan. He appears in

Dongshan yulu 69, the first part of the story also appearing as case 62 of the Serenity Records. He taught in the capital city Jingzhao (also known as Changan) and was famed for his full beard as well as this story from the Jingde Chuandeng Lu:

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; MiHu was dwelling in Jingzhao. An elder asked him, "These days people see a piece of rope in the moonlight and say it's a snake. I ask you, what would you call it if you saw a Buddha?"

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; MiHu said, "If there is a Buddha to be seen, it's not other than all beings."

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; The elder said, "A thousand years of peach pits."

&nbsp;

Jinhua Juzhi (Chin-hua Chu-chih, Kinka Gutei), 9th C. A Dharma-heir of Hangzhou Tianlong. He appears in Sanbyakusoku Shobogenzo case 245, Blue Cliff Records 19, Records of Serenity 84, and Gateless Gate 3 (all of these are more or less the same case).

Jinniu (Chin-nui, Kingyu), n.d. One of Mazu's eighty-four Dharma-heirs. He appears in Blue Cliff Records case 74.

Juefan Huihong (Chiao-fan Hui-hung, Kakuhan Eko) of Simen (Shih-men, Sekimon), 1071-1128. Author of The Forest Records (Linjian-lu, Rinkan-roku or Sekimon-rinkan-roku). Published in 1107. It has 300 chapters describing various Buddhist Masters and monks. Dogen quotes from it (on Bodhidharma) in Gyoji and in Yuibutsu Yobutsu.

Keizan Jokin , 1268-1325. Ordained by Koun Ejo. Dharma-heir of Tettsu Gikai and founder of Sojiji Monastery. Keizan extended Soto Zen widely into the Japanese lay populace. Author of the Keizan Shingi, the Denkoroku, Sankon Zazen Setsu, Zazen Yojinki. He appears in Transmission of Reality Case 14.

Kosho Chido, d. 1670. Thirtieth abbot of Eihei-ji, in 1667 he published all six essays of the Eihei Shingi together in the Shohon edition.

Koshu, 1424-1502? Fifteenth abbot of Eihei-ji, he first collected and copied Tenzo kyokun and Chiji Shingi.

Koun Ejo , 1198-1280. Dogen's senior student and Dharma-heir and second abbot of Eihei-ji. He edited many of Dogen's writings and transcribed talks. Author of Komyozo Zanmai. See Denkoroku Chapter 53. He appears in Transmission of Reality Case 12.

Liangshan Yuanguan ; trad. Chinese: (Liang-shan Yüan-kuan; Japanese: Ryzan) Enkan), n.d.

Dharma-heir of Tongan Daopi. See Denkoroku 43.

Li Jingrang (Li Ching-jang, Ri Keijo), n.d. A government official who was a student and benefactor of Guishan.

Li Tongxuan A lay scholar who was an important figure in the development and popularization of Huayan thought

Linguan Weiqing (Ling-yuan Wei-ch'ing, Reigen Isei), d. 1117. A Dharma-heir of Huitang Zuxin.

Linji Yixuan (Lin-chi I-hsuan, Rinzai Gigen), d. 867. Huizhao (Hui-chao, Esho) is a posthumous title. Linji was the Founding Ancestor of the Linji (Rinzai) Lineage. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 20 and 32, Records of Serenity 13, 38, 80, 86, 95. See Dogen's Gyoji.

Lingyun Zhijian (Ling-yun Chih-ch'in, Rei-un Shigon), n.d., Tang dynasty. A Dharma-heir of Guishan Lingyou. He wrote this verse about his waking up at the sight of peach blossoms:

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp;For thirty years I sought the perfect swordsman.

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp;How many leaves fell, how many branches bloomed.

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp;One moment I saw the peach flowers bloom and

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp;from that moment to this I have had no doubt.

See Dogen's Hotsu Mujoshin, Bendowa, and Keisei Sanshoku: Sounds of the Valley Streams, Colours of Mountains.

Li Tongxuan 635-730 Tang Huayan master

Longshan (Lung-shan, Ryuzan), n.d. A Dharma-heir of Mazu. Also known as Yinshan (Hidden Mountain). He appears in Dogen's Sanbyakusoku Shobogenzo case 222 in Dongshan's "Two Clay Oxen."

Longtan Chongxin (Lung-t'an Ch'ung-hsin, Ryotan Soshin), 9th C. Gave transmission to Deshan. Appears in Gateless Gate 28. See Dogen's Shinfukatoku.

Longya Judun (Lung-ya Chu-tun, Ryuge Koton), 834/5-920/23. A Dharma-heir of Dongshan Liangjie. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 20 (which is also Records of Serenity 80) and cases 48, 49. He is referred to in Dogen's Bendowa. See the Transmission of Luminosity for a few of his verses and The Lineage of Luminosity: Dongshan's Continuing Lineage Part 2.

Luohan Guichen. See Dizeng Guichen.

Luoshan Daoxian (Lo-shan Tao-hsien, Rzan Dokan), n.d. A Dharma-heir of Yantou Quanho. See Dogen's Sanbyakusoku Shobogenzo 97.

Luxuan (Lu-hsuan, Rikko), 764-834. A lay student of Nanquan Puyuan. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 40.

Luzu Baoyun &nbsp;(Lu—tsu Pao-yun, Roso Houn), n.d. A Dharma-heir of Mazu. Although there is no record of his sayings and doings as such, many important figures such as Dongshan Liangjie encountered him. His answer to questions about Zen was usually to turn and face the wall in zazen: an open invitation to experience the answer.

[Maha]kashyapa , 6th Century B.C.E. The First Indian Ancestor. He is said to have received transmission of the true Dharma Eye Treasury when he smiled at Sakyamuni's twirling of a flower before the assembly at Vulture Peak. He was known as foremost amongst the disciples in ascetic practice and is said to be waiting in a Himalayan cave to transmit Sakyamuni's kesa to the future Buddha Maitreya. Appears in Gateless Gate 6. See Denkoroku Chapter 2.

Magu Baoche &nbsp;(Ma-ku Pao-che, Mayoku Hotetsu), n.d. A Dharma-heir of Mazu. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 31 and Records of Serenity 16 (which are the same case). See also Dogen's Genjokoan.

Maudgalyayana, 6th Century B.C.E. One of Sakyamuni's ten great disciples, foremost in the manifestation of supernatural powers. He was ino at the Veluvana Vihara, the monastery donated by King Bimbisara. See Recorded Teachings of Vimalakirti.

Mazu Daoyi . See Jiangxi Mazu Daoyi.

Miaoxin [zi Xianhuai] (Miao-hsin [tzu Hsien-huai]; Myoshin [of Waisu]) n.d. A female monastic disciple of Yangshan Huiji. See Bowing and Receiving: Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's Raihai Tokuzui.

Mingzhao Deqian (Ming-chao Te-chien, Myosho Tokken), c. 10th C. Dharma-heir of Lohan Daoxiang. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 48, Records of Serenity 87, Sanbyakusoku 57.

Mingzhao Qisong (Ming-chao Ch'i-sung, Myokyo Kaisu), 1007-72. A noted scholar-monk who compiled a history of the Chan transmission, he was an heir of Dongshan Xiaocong (Tozan Gyoso in Japanese) in the Yunmen Lineage.

Moshan Liaoran or Laoran (Mo-shan Liao-jan; Massan Ryonen), n.d. A nun who was Dharma-heir of Gaoan Dayu, one of Linji's teachers, she was a teacher of Linji's disciple, Guanzhi Zhixian. See Jiangde Chuandeng-lu 11. See Dogen's Raihai Tokuzui.

Muju Dokyo (, 1 January 1227 - 9 November 1312), birth name Ichien Dky, was a Buddhist monk of the Japanese Kamakura period. He is superficially considered a Rinzai monk by some due to his compilation of the Shasekishu and similar books of koans, but there is good evidence that he

was also an eager student of the Tendai, Pure Land, and Hosso sects, and he is occasionally placed in the Shingon and Ritsu sects as well. Born into the privileged Kajiwara family, he began his service by becoming a page at Jufuku-ji at the age of 13. He became a priest at the age of 18, in Hitachi Province, moving to Kanto for his studies. He founded Choraku-ji temple in Ueno as well as various other temples, and retired at the age of 80. His most important teacher was Enni, who practiced zazen as well as the engaged study of various traditions. The only ideology Muj disapproved of was intolerance, and he "was himself aware of, and intrigued by, the paradox of the position". (Morrell 1985:19) He was disdainful of contemporaries such as Nichiren Shonin who denounced all practices but their own, and he accepted all schools of Buddhism as having a useful teaching, writing in the preface to Shasekishu that "when a man who practices one version of the Way of Buddha vilifies another because it differs from his own sect, he cannot avoid the sin of slandering the Law." [Wikipedia]

Mushin Daie, 1748-1825. Dharma-heir of Ryoshin Bodai. Made extensive additions to the Blue Cliff Records and the Himitsu Shobogenzo.

Muzhou Daoming (Mu-chou Tao-ming, Bokushu Domyo), ca. 780-877. Also called Venerable Chen, his family name. Along with Linji, a Dharma-heir to Huangbo (Huang-po, Obaku), d. 850 and in turn gave transmission to Yunmen (Yun-men Wen-yen, Unmon Bun'en). He appears in Blue Cliff Records 10, Records of Serenity 64, 92 and in the Linji yu-lu (Rinzai roku). See Dogen's Eihei Gen zenji goroku 3, Gyoji, and Muchu Setsumu.

Myoan Yosai or Eisai, also known as Zenko kokushi, 1141-1215. Yosai was a Tendai monk who had travelled to China twice in search of supplementary teachings. During his second trip in 1187 he received inka from Xu'an Huaichang (Hsu-an Huai-ch'ang, Kian Esho) as an heir in the Huanglong (Oryu) stream of the Linji House. Eisai taught Zen mixed with the exoteric and tantric Teachings (kenmitsu) of the Tendai House and in 1204 was appointed abbot of Kennin-ji by the emperor. His Lineage died out after only a few generations and can be said to only have continued through Dogen's Soto Lineage because Dogen was the sole heir of Eisai's major disciple Myozen Ryonen. See Dogen's Bendowa.

Myozen Ryonen, 1184-1225. Also known as Butsuji Myozen. Dharma-heir of Myoan Yosai, he gave Transmission of the Linji Lineage to Dogen. He journeyed to China with Dogen in 1223 and practiced for three years at Tiantong-si where he died at Liaoren Hall. Myozen died in zazen posture and it was said that his cremation manifested a five-coloured rainbow body and three brilliant pearls were found in the ashes. A memorial statue of Myozen was installed at the monastery. See Dogen's Bendowa. See Cooking Zen.

Nagarjuna (Nagyaarjuna), 2nd-3rd Century. The Fourteenth Indian Ancestor. A primary exponent of the Madhyamika teaching, which applied the implications of Sunyata to all conceptual/experiential categories, undercutting the substantialism of Abhidharma. Nagarjuna's teaching is so universally acclaimed that virtually all later Mahayana movements claim him as an

ancestor. See Denkoroku Chapter 15.

Nanda, 6th Century B.C.E. Half-brother of Sakyamuni; they were both sons of King Suddhodana. After Sakyamuni left home, Nanda became heir to the throne but later joined the Buddhist order and became an awakened arhat.

Nanquan Puyuan (Nan-ch'uan P'u-yuan, Nansen Fugan), 748-835. A Dharma-heir of Mazu Daoyi. He had seventeen heirs, amongst them Zhaozhou Congshen and Changsha Jingcen. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 28, 31, 40, 63, 64, 69, Records of Serenity 9, 10, 16, 23, 79, 90, 93 and Gateless Gate 14, 19, 27, 34. See Dogen's Gyoji.&nbsp;

Nanyang Huizhong (Nan-yang Hui-cheng; Nanyo Echu; also Dazheng Chanshi, Ta-cheng Ch'an-shih, Daisho zenji), 675-775. A Dharma-heir of Huineng, the Sixth Ancestor. After receiving the Transmission he went into hermitage on Baiya&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;shan (Hakugai san) in Nanyang. Emperor Suzong had him dragged from his hermitage in 761 when Huizhong was about 81 and had him installed as as the court Chan Master. He also served as the Teacher of Suzong's successor Daizong. Commonly referred to as the National Teacher (guoshi &nbsp;or kokushi) in Zen texts. &nbsp;He was independent of the various Northern and Southern schools of Chan that emerged and was respected by all of them.&nbsp;He appears in Blue Cliff Records 18, 69, 99, Records of Serenity 42, 85 and Gateless Gate 17. See Dogen's Bendowa, Gyoji, Mujo Sepopo, Osaku-sendaba, Bukkyo, Kobutsu-shin, Taishin-tsu and Keizan Jokin zenji's Denkoroku 39.

Nanyuan Huiyong (Nan-yuan Hui-yung; Nan'in Egyo), 860-930. Teacher of Fengxue Yenzhao in the third generation Linji Lineage.

Nanyue Huairang (Nan-yueh Hai-jang, Nangaku Ejo), 677-744. Dahui (Ta-hui, Daie) is a posthumous honorific. A Dharma-heir of the Sixth Ancestor, Dharma-brother of Qingyuan Xingsi. Two of the Five Houses of classical Chan stem from his Transmission. His Dharma-heir was Mazu Daoyi. His dialogue with Mazu on "polishing the tile" was tremendously influential for Dogen. See Dogen's Gyoji.

Nanyue Cikan (Nan-yueh Tz'u-k'an, Nangaku Jikan), n.d. Also known as Tiemien, "Iron Face" because of his strictness. He was a Dharma-heir of Huanglong Huinan.

Nanyue Huisi&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;(Nan-yueh Hui-ssu, Nangaku Eshi), 515-577. The Master of Zhiyi and lecturer on the Lotus Sutra. A Chinese and Japan legend has it that he was reborn in Japan as Prince Shotoku. See Dongshan yulu 43.

Nanyue Xuantai (Nan-yueh Hsuan-t'an; Nangaku Gentai), 9th C. Dharma-heir of Shishuang Qingzhu. See Dogen's Gyoji.

Niaoko Daolin (Niao-k'o Tao-lin, Choka Dorin), 741-824. Known as "Bird's Nest" he was a

Dharma-heir of Jingshan Guoyi (Ching-shan Kuo-i, Kinzan Koku-itsu) in the Niutou (Ox-head) Lineage that derived from the Fourth Ancestor. See Dogen's Shoaku Makusa. See Anzan Hoshin roshi's Doing Not-Doing.

Niutou Farong (Niu-t'ou Fa-jung; Gozu Hōyū) 594-657. A Dharma-heir of Daoxin, the founder of the Oxhead School of Northern Chan. A text called "Words on Mind" (Xin Ming, Hsin Ming, Shinmei) is attributed to him. &nbsp;

Panshan Baoji (P'an-shan Bao-chi, Banzan Hoshaku), 720-814. A Dharma-heir of Mazu Daoyi, he was the Master of Puhua. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 37. He is quoted by Keizan zenji in Denkoroku 49.&nbsp;

Pangyun jushi (P'ang-yun, Houn), 740-808/811. Known as Layman Pang or Ho koji . The term "koji" was applied to lay students who had not received monastic ordination but still practised intensively. Similiar to anagarika. A student of Mazu, Shitou and Yaoshan, among others. Pang lived in retreat at Yaoshan's monastery for sixteen years. His whole family were practitioners and his daughter also is especially noted as an adept. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 42. See The Recorded Sayings of Layman Pang, trans. by Sasaki, Iriya, Fraser, Weatherhill, 1971. Also see Medicine Mountain: The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyān.

Panshan Baoji (P'an-shan Pao-chi, Banzan Hoshaku), 720-814. A Dharma-heir of Mazu Daoyi. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 37.

Pei Xuigong (P'ei Hsiu-kung, Hai Kokyu), 797-870. Also Peixui. Prime minister and governor of several provinces, he was also a lay Zen adept who studied with many masters, including Guishan and Huangbo. Pei Xuigong compiled Huangbo's Record (see translation by John Blofeld, The Zen Teachings of Huang Po). Arranged the building of Huangbo's temple and also met Hualin's tigers. See Sanbyakusoku 9 and in Eihei Koroku 9:48.

Pojo Chinul , or Jinul ;, 1158-1210. Re-established Korean Son. Influenced by Zongmi and Dahui. See Tracing Back the Radiance, trans. by Robert Buswell, U. of Hawaii Press, 1994.

Prajnatara (Hannyatara), n.d. The Twenty-Seventh Indian Ancestor. Gave Transmission to Bodhidharma. See Denkoroku Chapter 28. He appears in Records of Serenity 3. This same koan appears in Eihei Gen zenji goroku 10.

Puhua (P'u-hua, Fuke), d. 860. A Dharma-heir of Panshan Baoji. After Panshan's death he hung around Linji's community, acting as a kind of "holy fool", and most of what we know of him appears in the Linji yulu. He appears in Dogen's Sanbyakusoku case 96. The Japanese Fuke House of Zen ( ) made him their putative founder.&nbsp;

[Wikipedia: Fuke Zen was brought to Japan by Shinchi Kakushin ( )(1207-1298), also known as Muhon Kakushin ( ) and posthumously as Hotto Kokushi ( ). Kakushin had travelled to China for six

years and studied with the famous Chinese Chan master Wumen ( ) of the Linji lineage. Kakushin became a disciple of Chôsan, a 17th generation teacher of the Fuke sect of China. Although it no longer exists as a religious organization, Fuke Zen's following during the feudal period was quite extensive. Its members could be easily recognized by their practice playing the shakuhachi flute, which was considered a form of meditation and was called suizen ( ). These musician-monks were known at first as komos ( ; literally "straw-mat monks") and, by the mid-1600s, as komus ( ; literally "emptiness monk").]

Qianfeng Chuanchu (Ch'ien-feng Ch'uan-ch'u, Seiho Denso or Kempo), n.d. Dharma-heir of Luopu Yuanan. See Dogen's Jippo and Sanbyakusoku Shobogenzo case 37.

Qinglin Shiqian (Ch'ing-lin Shih-ch'ien, Seirin Shiken), n.d. A Dharma-heir of Dongshan Liangjie. See Dongshan yulu 54, 55 and Sanbyakusoku 204. See Rhythm and Song and TLOL The Continuing Lineage of Dongshan: Part 2.

Qingyuan Xingsi (Ch'ing-yuan Hsing-ssu, Seigen Gyoshi), 660?-740. The Thirty-Fourth Ancestor. A Dharma-heir of the Sixth Ancestor Huineng. His Dharma-heir was Shitou Xiqian. His posthumous title was Hongzhi (Hung-chi, Gusai), "Helping Others." Very little is known about his biography. Three of the Five Houses of classical Chan developed out of his Lineage: the Cadong, Yunmen, and Fayan. He appears in Records of Serenity 5. See Denkoroku Chapter 35. See Dogen's Shisho, Gyoji.

Qinshan Wensui (Ch'in-shan Wen-sui, Kinzan Bunsui). n.d. A Dharma-heir of Dongshan Liangjie. He studied at first under Deshan along with Xuefeng. Deshan once beat him so severely he was put in the infirmary. After this, he left to study with Dongshan and became abbot of Qinshan monastery at 27 years old. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 56.

Ruiyan Shiyan (Jui-yen Shih-yen, Zuigan Shigen), n.d. A Dharma-heir of Yantou Quanho, he also studied with Jiashan Shanhui. He appears in Records of Serenity 72, and the same koan appears in Gateless Gate 12 and Sanbyakusoku Shobogenzo 247.

Sanghanandi (Sogyanandai), d. 74 B.C.E. The Seventeenth Indian Ancestor. See Denkoroku Chapter 18.

Sanping Yizhong (San-p'ing I-chung; Sampei Gichu), 781-872. A Dharma-heir of Dadian Baotong (a successor to Shitou). See Dogen's Gyoji. He is quoted in Denkoroku 28 as saying, "If you can understand here, there is no confusion. Whether you distinguish or do not distinguish between essence and function, there is nothing wrong."

In the Jingde Chuandenglü:

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; When Sanping first called on Shigong Huicang when Shigong saw him coming he went through the motions of bending back a bow and said, "Look, an arrow." &nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; Sanping bared his chest and said, "This is the arrow that kills. What is the

arrow that gives life?"

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; Shigong plucked the bowstring three times upon which Sanping bowed.  
&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; Shigong said, "After thirty years with a single bow and two arrows I've finally managed to shoot half a sage."

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; Then he broke his bow and arrows.

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; Later Sanping took this up with Datian who said, "If it is the arrow which gives life, why draw it on a bowstring?"

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; Sanping did not know what to say.

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; Datian said, "Thirty years from now it will still be hard for someone to bring up these words.

Sansheng Huiran (San-sheng Hui-jan, Sansho Enen), 9th C. A Dharma-heir of Linji Yixuan, he compiled the Linji yulu of his Master's Teachings. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 49, 68 and Records of Serenity 13, 33 (which is the same case as Blue Cliff 49), 63 and in the Dongshan yulu 68.

Sengcan . See Jianzhi Sengcan.

Shenshan Sengmi (Shen-shan Seng-me, Shinzan Somitsu) n.d. A Dharma-brother to Dongshan Liangjie while studying with Yunyan Tansheng, he continued his training with Dongshan who often referred to him as "Uncle Mi". See Rhythm and Song and the Dongshan yulu.

Sengzhao (Seng-chao, Cho-ho), 374-414. Sengzhao was a student of Kumarajiva and was on his staff of translators. He wrote an introduction to Kumarajiva's Brahmajala sutra, which forms the basis of the forty-eight supporting precepts practised by monastics of the Northern Mountain Order of WWZC. The Zhaolun (Chao-lun) is an important early Chinese Buddhist collection of essays which presented time, sunyata, prajna, and nirvana in the context of native, Taoist-inspired terminology. Shitou Xiqian was inspired to compose the Sandokai: Meeting of Ultimate and Relative while reading the Zhaolun. He also wrote a commentary on the Vimalakirti sutra. He is mentioned in Blue Cliff Records 40. See Without Difficulty, Studying the Mystery, and Denkoroku: Record of the Transmission of Luminosity.&nbsp;From the Zhaolun:

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; The true nature of dharmas is that they are neither in motion, nor at rest. Or, to put it differently: they are both in motion and in rest. To use the formulation of the Middle Way: by stating that there is both motion and rest, we fall into one of the two extremes. By stating that there is neither motion nor rest, we follow the Middle Way."

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; "All dharmas are truly non-existent in one sense and not non-existent in another sense. In the first point of view they are although apparently existing, actually non-existing. In the second point of view they are although apparently non-existing, actually not non-existing."

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; "Thus the sage is as a hollow void. He cherishes no-knowledge. He remains in this world of impermanence and activities; however he abides in the realm of non-action (wu-wei). He is situated within the walls of what is expressible, and yet he lives in the open space that

transcends all speech. He is silent and alone, empty and open; his form of existence cannot be covered in words. There remains nothing further to be said about him.

Shanku Huang (Shan-k'u Huang, Sankoku O), 1045-1105. A noted poet and government official who was a lay disciple of Huitang Zuxin.

Sariputra, 6th Century B.C.E. One of the ten great disciples of Sakyamuni. He was especially noted for wisdom. See the Recorded Teachings of Vimalakirti, the Heart sutra, the 8,000 Line Prajnaparamita Discourse.

Shenxiu (Shen-hsiu, Jinshu), 605?-706. "Heavenly Excellence." Shenxiu was a Dharma-heir of Hongren and for many years his Lineage of East Mountain teachings or "Northern" Chan was tremendously influential. See Denkoroku Chapter 34. Mentioned in Gyoji.

Shexian Guixing (She-hsien Kuei-ching, Sekken Kisei), c. 10th C. A Dharma successor of Shoushan Xingian in the fifth generation after Linji, he was known for his strickness. See Dogen's Uji.

Shigong Huicang (Shih-kung Hui-ts'ang, Shakkyo Ezo), n.d. A Dharma-heir of Mazu Daoyi. He was formerly a hunter who became a monk when he was chasing a deer and came upon Mazu in hermitage. He appears with his Dharma-brother Xitang Zhizang in Dogen's Koku, Sanbyakusoku 248, and Eihei Koroku 9: 53. See also Sanping Yizhong.

Shishuang Chuyuan . See Ciming (Shishuang) Quyuan.

Shishuang Qingzhu or Qingju (Shih-shuang Ch'ing-chu, Sekiso Keisho), 807-888. Not to be confused with Ciming (Shishuang) Quyuan. A Dharma-heir of Daowu Yuanzhi, in the line of Yaoshan Weiyuan. He practiced as rice steward under Guishan before studying with Daowu. Dongshan Liangjie had a monk track him down and he was appointed abbot on Mount Shishuang. His community there was noted for never laying down to sleep and was called the "Dead Tree Hall." He appears in Records of Serenity 68, 89, 96, 98. He appears in the Sayings and Doings of Dongshan (Dongshan yulu) section 75. See Dogen's Gyoji.

Shitou Xiqian (Shih-t'ou Hsi-ch'ien, Sekito Kisen) 700-790. The Thirty-Fifth Ancestor. Author of the Cantong qi (T'san-t'ung-ch'i, Sandokai), trans. by Anzan Hoshin roshi and Yasuda Joshu roshi in Chanting Breath and Sound, Great Matter Publications, 1994. He was accepted as a student by Huineng in 713. After Huineng died, we know very little about what happened next until he was ordained at Lofu-shan in 728, after which he went to study with Qingyuan in Zhihzhou. He studied with Qingyuan for twelve years and then, in 742, Xiqian went to Nanyue where he built a hermitage for himself on top of a large flat rock east of the Nan-zi temple. Thus people called him "Shitou Hoshang," "cliff-edge monk" or, more colourfully, "Stone-head."&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; In 764 he went to Liangduan where he and his his monastery had a great

deal of interaction with another famous Zen master Jiangxi Mazu Daoyi (Chiang-hsi Ma-tsu Tao-i, Baso Doitsu) 709-788. The Jingde Chuandeng-lu says of these two, "West of the (Jiangxi) river the great solitary one (Mazu) is the master and south of the lake (Hunan) Cliff-edge (Shihtou) is the master. Whoever has not met these two great masters is ignorant of Zen."

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; Three of the early five Zen Houses or streams stem from Shihtou; as well as Yaoshan Weiyen, from whom sprang the Caodong-zong (Soto), his many Dharma-heirs include Tianhuang Daowu (T'ien-huang Tao-wu, Tenno Dogo), 748-807, from whose heirs the Fayen-zong (Hogen) and Yunmen-zong (Ummon) originated. Danxia Tianran (Tan-hsia T'ien-jan, Tanka Tennen), 739-824, and Dandian Baotong (Ta-tien Pao-t'ung, Daiten Hotsu), d. 819, were two other Dharma-heirs, but their Lineages died out after a few generations. See Denkoroku, Chapter 36. See Dogen's Gyoji. See Anzan Hoshin roshi's Studying the Mystery for extensive commentary on the Sandokai and Shitou's Teachings. Also see Medicine Mountain: The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyen.

Shoushan Xingnian (Shou-shan Hsing-nien, Shuzan Shonen) 926-993. Dharma-heir of Fengxue Yanzhao. Gave Transmission to Fenyang and Shexian Guisheng. See Dogen's Uji.

Shuangling Hua (Shuang-ling Hua, Sorei Ke), n.d. A Dharma-heir of Huitang Zuxin. See Dogen's Chiji Shingi.

Sima Chengzheng (Ssu-ma Ch'eng-cheng, Shiba Shotei), n.d. A lay student of Mazu Daoyi. See Dogen's Chiji Shingi.

Sikong Benjing (Shih-k'ung Pen-ching, Shiku Honjo), 667-0761. An heir of the Sixth Ancestor. His phrase, "A person who seeks the Way practise the Way" is quoted in Dogens Bendowa.

Sixin Wuxin (Ssu-hsin Wu-hsin, Shishin Goshin) 1044-1115. A Dharma-heir of Huitang Zuxin in the Linji Lineage. He is quoted in Dogen's Yuibutsu Yobustsu.

Songyuan Chongyue (Sung-yuan Ch'ung-yueh, Shogen Sogaku), 1139-1209. A Dharma Ancestor of the Transmission that came to Hakuin. He appears in Gateless Gate 20. He is also known for the following: Master Songyuan addressed the assembly and said, "In order to realize the Way with perfect clarity, there is one essential point you must penetrate and not avoid: the red thread of passions that cannot be severed. Few really face this problem, and it is not at all easy to settle. Face it directly without hesitation, for how else can liberation come?"

Sushan Guangren or Shushan Kuangren (Shu-shan K'uang-jen, Sozan Konin), 837-909. Popularly known as Uncle Dwarf. A Dharma-heir of Dongshan Liangjie. A major character in Rhythm and Song. The Jingde Chuandenglu says: "Amongst all of Dongshan's students Guangren had a natural power in displaying the innermost mystery. His fellow students were as impressed by him as if he could chew the iron tip of an arrow. Whenever they wanted to clarify a question about the various depths of practice they said, "Let's just go and ask Uncle Dwarf." See

Dogen's Kobutsushin and Sanbyakusoku Shobogenzo 97 and TLOL The Continuing Lineage of Dongshan Part 2.

Taiyuan Fu or Daiyuan Fu (T'ai-yuan Fu, Taigen Fu or Daigen Fu Joza), 9th C. Disciple of Xuefeng awakened by a tenzo. Dogen refers to this story in Tenzo kyokun; see Cooking Zen.

According to the Wudeng Huiyuan (Goto Egen) Chapter 17: Once the great Buddhist scholar Daiyuan Fu (Daigen Fu Joza) was lecturing on the Great Cessation Discourse (Mahaparinirvana sutra) at Guangkao-Xiao in Yangzhou. The tenzo from Jiashan who was travelling from temple to temple, happened to get snowed in there and so he listened in on the lecture. Daiyuan Fu was explaining the section on the three factors of Buddha Nature and the three virtues of the Dharmakaya when, in the midst of the explanation of the subtleties of the Dharmakaya, the tenzo burst out laughing. After the lecture Daiyuan Fu asked the tenzo to his room where he said, "Look, I'm really a very simple person and so the comments I make when I lecture on the sutras are just literal explanations. I noticed that you couldn't help laughing about what I said about the Dharmakaya. Could you be so kind as to point out where I went off?" The tenzo said, "Well, you were saying just what was written down there, and so it's not that it is wrong. It's just that you didn't know what you were saying." So after this Daiyuan Fu ceased any further lectures and began to visit many masters, inquiring of the Buddha Dharma, exerting himself in practice.

Tanlin (T'an-lin) 506-574. Author or editor of Bodhidharma's "Two Entries and Four Practices".

Tanzhou Longshan (T'an-chou Lung-shan, Tanshu Ryuzan), c. 9th C. Dharma-heir of Mazu Daoyi. He dwelled in hermitage throughout his life. See Dogen's Gyoji. He appears in Dongshan yulu 23 which Dogen zenji uses as Shobogenzo Sanbyakusoku Case 222: Dongshan's "Two Clay Oxen Enter the Sea".

Tettsu Gikai , 1219-1309. A student of Dogen's who later received Transmission from Koun Ejo. Gave Transmission to Keizan Jokin. Third Abbot of Eihei-ji, founded Daijo-ji. Travelled to China to study monastic architecture and forms. Appears in Transmission of Luminosity Cases 13, 14.

Tianhuang Daowu (T'ien-huang Tao-wu, Tenno Dogo), 748-807. A Dharma-heir of Shitou Xiqian. The Fayen-zong (Hogen) and Yunmen-zong (Ummon) originated from this line.

Tiantong Hongzhi. See Hongzhi Zhengjue.

Tiantong Rujing (T'ien-t'ung Ju-ching, Tendo Nyojo), 1163-1228. The Fiftieth Ancestor. Gave Transmission to Eihei Dogen. Appears in Transmission of Luminosity Case 11. See Denkoroku Chapter 51. See Gyoji.

Tianyi Yihuai (T'ien-yi Yi-huai, Tenne Gikai), 993-1064. Studied with Shexian Guisheng. A Dharma-heir of Xuedou. Gave Transmission to Yuantong Faxiu. See Dogen's Chiji Shingi.

Tongfeng Anju (T'ung-feng An-chu, Toho Anshu), 9th C. Dharma-heir of Linji. Lived as a hermit. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 85.

Tongan Daopi (T'ung-an Tao-p'i) Doan Dhi. See Denkoroku 41.

Tongan Guanzhi (T'ung-an Kuan-chih, Dan Kanshi). See Denkoroku 42.

Touzi Datong (T'ou-tzu Ta-t'ung, Tosu Daido), 819-914. Dharma-heir of Cuiwei Wuxue, two generations after Shitou's student Danxia Tianran. Gave Transmission to Dongkeng Yanjun. Was originally a Huayan monk before beginning Chan study. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 41, 79, 80, 91. See Dogen's Chiji Shingi, Gyoji.

Touzi Yiqing (T'ou-tzu Yi-ch'ing, Tosu Gisei), 1032-83. The Forty-Fourth Ancestor. Received Dayang's Caodong Transmission through Fushan Fayuan. Gave Transmission to Furong Daokai. Deeply immersed in Huayan studies. He appears in Records of Serenity 64 and Sanbyakusoku Shobogenzo case 160. See Denkoroku Chapter 45.

Vasumitra (Bashumitsu), circa 1st C. The seventh Ancestor in India. Born in Gandhara, the Dharma-heir of Miccaka. Before meeting Miccaka he was famous for wandering about town with a bowl of wine that he was always sipping from. See Denkoroku 8. See Dogen's Koku.

Wansong Xingxiu (Wan-sung Hsing-hsiu, Bansho Gyoshu), 1166-1246. Caodong master, Dharma-heir of Xueyuan. Composed the pointing phrases and added commentaries to the cases and capping verses compiled by Hongzhi Zhenjue. He taught at Conglin (T'sung-lin, Shorin, Serenity monastery) and published the volume under the name of the Congrong lu in 1224.

Weiyi Xitang (Wei-i Hsi-t'ang, Ichi Seido), 1202-1281. Weiyi means "west hall". A Linji Master of the Yangqi line, he had retired to Tiantongshan while Dogen was there. See Dogen's Shisho.

Wufeng Changguan (Wufeng Ch'ang-kuan, Goho Jokan), ca. 8th-9th C. A Dharma-heir of Baizhang. Very little is known of him. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 70, 71.

In the Wudeng Huiyan it says: Baizhang said, "I would like someone to go to Xitang and tell him something." Wufeng said, "I'll go." Baizhang said, "How will you speak to him?" Wufeng said, "I'll wait until I see Xitang, then I'll speak." Baizhang asked, "What will you say?" Wufeng said, "When I come back, I'll tell you."

Wujiu Youxuan (Wu-chiu Yu-hsuan, Ukyu Yugen), n.d. One of Mazu's eighty-four Dharma-heirs. He appears in Blue Cliff Records case 75.

Wuliang Congzhou (Wu-liang Ts'ung-shou, Muryo Soju), 13th C. His Daily Life in the Assembly is translated by Griffith T. Foulk in Buddhism in Practice, Princeton, 1995.

Wumen Huikai (Wu-men Hui-k'ai, Mumon Ekai), 1183 to 1260. Compiled the famous Gateless Gate (Wumenguan, Wu-men-kuan, Mumonkan) collection of 49 koan. Published in 1229, it was not brought to Japan until 1254.

Wuzhou Wenxi (Wu-cjou Wen-hsi, Mujaku Bunki), 821-900. Received Transmission from Yangshan. Spoke often with Manjushri. See Dogen's Chiji Shingi.

Wuxie Lingmo (Wu-hsieh Lingmo), 747-818, was a second generation Teacher in the line of Mazu. He also studied with Shitou. Dongshan was ten years old when he began to study with Wuxie. See Dongshan yulu 1 and 107.

Wuzu Faya (Wu-tsu Fa-yen, Goso Hoen), 1024-1104. Also known as Qingyuan (not to be confused with Fayan Wenyi or Qingyuan Xingsi). He studied with many Masters including Fushan Fayuan but became the Dharma-heir of Baiyun Shouduan. He is quoted in Dogen's Tenborin, "When a person exhibits reality and returns to the source, space throughout the ten directions crunches up against itself." See Dogen's Gyoji.

Xiang Baojing (Hsiang Pao-ching, Kozan Hojo) of Mt. Ryumon near Rakuyo. According to the Jingde Chuandeng-lu, Huike was ordained as a homeless monk by Dhyana-charya Baojing at the Xiang-zi near Loyang and received the Complete Precepts at Yung-mu-zi. See Denkoroku 30. See Dogen's Gyoji.

Xingjiao Xiashou (Hsiang-chiao Hsia-shou, Kokyo Shoju), n.d. Is quoted in the Forest Records or Linjian-lu and in Dogen's Yuibutsu Yobutsu. See Anzan Hoshin roshi's teisho series "Seeing Eye to Eye."

Xianglin Chengyuan (Hsiang-lin Cheng-yuan, Kyorin Cho-on), ca. 908-87. A Dharma-heir of Yunmen Wenyen, Dharma brother of Dongshan Shouchou. He served as Yunmen's jisha (attendant for eighteen years and all this time the only Teaching he received was Yunmen calling out his name and, when he answered, then yelling: "WHAT IS THIS?" Appears in Blue Cliff Records 17 and in Wudeng Huiyuan 15.

Xiangyan Zhixian (Hsiang-yen Chih-hsien, Kyogen Chikan), d. 840 or 898. See Gateless Gate Case 3, Kaigenroku 9. Studied with Baizhang, received transmission from his Dharma-brother Guishan. See Dogen's Gabyo, Soshi-sairai-no-i and Gyoji.

Xichan (Hsi-ch'an, Saizen) n.d. A Dharma-heir of Nanquan. He is referred to in Blue Cliff Records Case 54.

Xingyang Qingrang (Hsiang-yang Chih-hsien, Koyo Seijo), n.d. A Dharma-heir of Bajiao Huiqing. One of the last Masters of the Guiyang school. He appears in Gateless Gate case 9.

Xitang Zhizang (Hsi-t'ang Chih-tsang , Seido Chizo), 735-814. A Dharma-heir of Mazu Daoyi. His Dharma-heirs Jilin Daoyi and Hongshe were Korean monks who were fundamental in the establishment of the Nine Mountains of Korean Chan. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 73. He appears with his Dharma-brother Shigong Huicang in Dogen's Koku.

Xiyuan Siming (His-yuan Ssu-ming, Saiin Shimyo), n.d. A Dharma-heir of Baishou Yanzhao.

Xuanzong (Hsuan-tsung, Senso), Tang emperor reigned from 847-860. During a period of hiding from his nephew Emperor Wu Zong, Xuan studied with Xiangyan, Yanguan and Huangbo. See Dogen's Gyoji.

Xuedou Chongxian (Hsueh-tou Ch'ung-hsien, Seccho Juken), 982-1052. Mingjue (Ming-chueh, Myokaku) was a posthumous title. In the Yunmen Lineage. Compiled the cases and provided the capping verses which became the basis for the Blue Cliff Records. He appears in Records of Serenity 26, 34. See Cooking Zen.

Xuansha Shibe (Hsuan-sha Shih-pei, Gensha Shibi), 835-908. A Dharma-heir of Xuefeng Yicun, they both died in the same year. Gave Transmission to Dizang Guichen. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 22, 56, 88, Records of Serenity 81 and in Women's commentary in Gateless Gate 41, Sanbyakasoku Shobogenzo case 112. See Dogen's Ikka Myoju, Gyoji, Bukkyo.

Xuefeng Yicun (Hsueh-feng I'tsun, Seppo Gison), 822-908. Also called Zhenjue Chen-chueh. He studied with Dongshan Liangjie, for nine training periods, with Touzi Datong for three, he became a Dharma-heir of Deshan Xuanjian. He was close friends with Yantou Quanhuo. The Yunmen and Fayen schools developed from his Dharma-heirs. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 5, 22, 44, 49, 51, 66, Records of Serenity 24, 33, 50, 55, 63, 64, 92 and Gateless Gate 13. He appears in the Sayings and Doings of Dongshan (Dongshan yulu) 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 61, 80. See Cooking Zen, Dogen's Chiji Shingi, Gyoji.

Yangqi Fanghui (Yang-ch'i Fang-hui, Yogi Hoe), 992-1049. Dharma-heir of Shishuang Chuyuan. Founder of the Yangqi, one of the two main lines of Linji Chan. All modern Japanese Rinzai Zen comes from his Lineage. See Dogen's Chiji Shingi, Gyoji.

Yangshan Huiji (Yang-shan Hui-chi; Gyozan or Kyozan Ejaku), 807-883. Along with his teacher Guishan (Kuei-shan Ling-yu; Isan Reiyu, 771-853), founded the Guiyang (Kuei-yang; Igyo) House. He received transmission as well from Danyuan Yingzhen (Tan-yuan Ying-chen; Tangen Oshin), c. 9 C., of ninety-seven mandalas that he integrated into the practice of the Guiyang school. Nicknamed "Little Sakyamuni." Yangshan appears in Blue Cliff Records 34 and 68, Records of Serenity 15, 26, 32, 37, 62, 72, 77, 90, 91 and in Gateless Gate 25 &nbsp;and in Dongshan yulu 69. See Dogen's Shisho, Gyoji.

Yanguan Qian (Yen-kuan Ch'i-an, Enkan Seian), d. 842. A Dharma-heir of Mazu. A posthumous title was Wukong (Awake Emptiness), which was conferred upon him by his former student Emperor Xuan Zong. He first studied the Vinaya deeply before studying with Mazu. He taught at Haichang zi in Yanguan, Hang region (Zhejiang). He appears in Records of Serenity case 25. See Dogen's Gyoji.

Yanshou (Yen-shou Chen-hsieh, Shiketsu),&nbsp;

Yantou Quanhuo (Yen-t'ou Ch'uan-huo, Ganto Zenkatsu), 828-887. A Dharma-heir of Deshan Xuanjin, close friend of Xuefeng. He gave transmission to Luoshan. The story of the great shout that resounded for ten li that he gave when murdered by bandits was pivotal for Hakuin Ekaku. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 51, 66, Records of Serenity 22, 43, 50, 55, 75 and Gateless Gate 13.&nbsp;

The Wudeng Huiyan says,  
&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp;During the turmoil at the end of the Tang dynasty bandits were about throughout the land. The community left the temple to hide in the forest. Yantou stayed alone at the temple, practising zazen. One day the leader of a bandit gang came to the temple. In a fury because there was nothing to steal, he brandished his knife and then stabbed Yantou. Yantou let out a penetrating shout and died. The sound was heard for ten miles around."&nbsp;

Yanyang Shanxin (Yen-yang Shan-hsin, Genyo Zenshin), n.d. One of two Dharma-heirs of Zhaozhou.&nbsp;

Yanyang was the monk who appears in the Kaigenroku as "the monk".  
&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp;A monk asked, "How is it when you have nothing?"

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp;Zhaozhou said, "Throw it away."

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp;The monk said, "I have nothing. How can I throw it away?"

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp;Zhaozhou said, "Then go on carrying it."

Yaoshan Weiyang &nbsp;(Yueh-shan Wei-yen; Yakusan Igen), 745-828 or 750-834. A posthumous name is Hongdao. The Thirty-Sixth Ancestor. A Dharma-heir of Shitou Xiqian. His Dharma-heirs were Yunyan Tansheng (from his heir Dongshan Liangjie the Caodong Lineage began) and Chuanzi Decheng, and Daowu Yuanzhi. He also studied with Mazu Daoyi, who had given Transmission to Daowu before Daowu studied with Yaoshan and received his Transmission. He appears in the Sayings and Doings of Dongshan (Dongshan yulu) 91, 110, 111, 112, 113. He appears in Records of Serenity 5 (comm.), 7. See Denkoroku Chapter 37. See also the encounters between Yaoshan and Shitou and then Mazu in Dogen's Uji. See Dogen's Immo, Kamkin, Busso, Sanjshichihon-Bodai-Bumpo, Jukai, Gyoji, Kangin. Anzan Hoshin roshi has compiled Medicine Mountain: Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyang

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp;Dogen zenji recounts the following story in Shobogenzo 30: Kangin: "The Ancestor Yaoshan usually did not allow sutra study but one day a monk found him looking at an open scroll. The monk said, "Teacher, you usually do not allow us to read the sutras, so why are you yourself reading them?"

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp;"I just need to rest my eyes on something."  
&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp;The monk replied, "Well, can I use the same excuse?"

&nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp;The master replied, "If you were to look at the sutras you'd burn a hole through their cover."&nbsp;

Yongjia Xuanjue (Yung-chia Hsuan-chueh, Yoka Genkaku) d. 713. His Zheng Daoge (Cheng Tao Ko, Sho Doka) is translated as the Song of Liberation by Yasuda Joshu roshi and Anzan Hoshin roshi, Treasury of Luminosity: Teachings of the Soto Zen Masters, WWZC Archives. He appears in Eihei Gen zenji goroku 3.

Yosai. See Myoan Yosai.

Youxi Daoyu of Taiju &nbsp;(Yu-hsi Tao-yu of T'ai-chu), n.d. A disciple of Dongshan Liangjie. Appears in Dongshan yulu 65.

Yuantong Faxiu (Yuan-t'ung Fa-hsiu, Enzu Hoshu), n.d.. A Dharma heir of Tianyi Yihuai, who had also studied with Fushan Fayuan's Master Shexian. Touzi Yiqing went to stay at his monastery following receiving Dayang's Transmission through Fushan. See Denkoroku Chapter 45.

Yuanwu Keqin (Yuan-wu K'o-ch'in, Engo Kokugon), 1063-1135. Native of P'eng-chou (Hoshu), he studied Zen under Wu-tsu Fa-yen (Goso Hoen) and inherited the Dharma from him. He lectured on the hundred koan and poems collected and composed by Hsueh-tou Chung-hsien (Setcho Juken), and compiled them into the Hekiganroku (Blue Cliff Record) with the addition of his introduction (suiji ), capping phrases (jakugo ) and discussion (hyosho ).

Yunfeng Wenyue (Yun-feng Wen-yueh, Umpo Bun'etsu) 998-1062. Linji Lineage. Quoted in Denkoroku Chapter 17.

Yungai Shouzhi (Yun-kai Shouh-chi, Ungai Shouchi), n.d.&nbsp;

Yunju Daoying (Yun-chu Tao-ying, Ungo Doyo), d. 902. Hongjue (Hung-chueh, Kokaku) was a posthumous title. The Thirty-Ninth Ancestor. A Dharma-heir of Dongshan Liangjie. He appears in the Sayings and Doings of Dongshan (Dongshan yulu) 40-49, 50, 85, 118. See Denkoroku Chapter 40. See Dogen's Gyoji. He appears in case 8 of the Tetteki Tosui (translated as the Iron Flute by Nyogen Senzaki and Ruth Strout McCandless, Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1964).

Yunmen Wenyen (Yun-men Wen-yen, Ummon Bun'en), 864-949. Kuangzhen (K'uang-chen, Kyushin) was a posthumous title. A Dharma-heir of Xuefeng Yicun, having also awakened under Muzhou Daoming. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 6, 8, 14, 15, 22, 27, 34, 39, 47, 50, 54, 60, 62, 77, 83, 86, 87, 88, Records of Serenity 11, 19, 24, 26, 31, 40, 61, 72, 78, 82, 92, 99 and in Gateless Gate 15, 16, 21, 39, 48. See Dogen's Komyo, Eihei Gen zenji goroku 3, and an attributed quote in Bendowa.

Yunyan Tansheng (Yun-yen T'an-sheng, Ungo Donjo), 781?-841. The Thirty-Seventh Ancestor.

He is sometimes considered to be the reincarnation of Shanavasa. He became a monk when he was sixteen and began his twenty years of study with Baizhang soon after. On the advice of his younger brother Daowu Yuanzhi he then studied with and received Transmission from Yaoshan Weiyuan. His Dharma-heir was Dongshan Liangjie. He appears in the Sayings and Doings of Dongshan (Dongshan yulu) sections 3-14, 48, 110-114. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 70, 72, 89 and in Records of Serenity 49, 54. See Denkoroku Chapter 38. See Dogen's Gyoji. Also see Medicine Mountain: The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan & Weiyuan.

Zhangjing (Chang-jing, Shokei), n.d. A Dharma-heir of Mazu. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 31.

Zhaozhou Congshen (Chao-chou Ts'ung-shen, Joshu Jushin), 778-897. A Dharma-heir of Nanquan Puyuan. He appears in Blue Cliff Records Cases 2, 9, 30, 41, 45, 52, 57, 58, 59, 64, 80, 96, Records of Serenity 9, 10, 18, 39, 47, 57, 63, and in Gateless Gate 1, 7, 11, 14, 19, 31, 37. See Dogen's Rahai Tokuzui, Dotoku, Katto, Hakuju-shu, Gyoji, Sanbyakusoku Shobogenzo 46, 284 and Eihei Koroku 9.21.

Zhengzong Bujue (Cheng-tsung Pu-chueh, Shoshu Fukaku), more commonly Huike (Hui-k'o, Eka), 487-593. The Second Chinese Ancestor. See Denkoroku, Chapters 29 and 30. See Dogen's Katto.

Zhenjie Qingliao (Chen-hsieh Ch'ing-liao, Shingetsu Shoryo), 1089-1151. Also known as Wukong (Wu-k'ung, Goku). The Forty-Seventh Soto Ancestor. See Denkoroku Chapters 48 and 49.

Zhimen Guangzuo (Chimen Kuang-tso, Chimon Koso), c. 10th C. A Dharma-heir of Xianglen Chengyuan in the Yunmen House. Gave Transmission to Xuedou, compiler of the koan and verses in the Blue Cliff Records. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 21, 91. See Dogen's Bukkoji and Shunju, Sanbyakusoku Shobogenzo case 238.

Zhiyi (Chih-i; Japanese: Chigi), 538-597 CE. Zhiyi is traditionally listed as the fourth ancestor, but is the founder of the Tiantai tradition of Buddhism in China. He is commonly called the Sramana Zhiyi. Roughly contemporary with Bodhidharma, he composed the Mohe Zhiguan, the Big Book of Stopping and Looking on the four harmonizations.

Zhuyu Ozhou (Chu-yu O-chou), n.d. A Dharma-heir of Nanquan Puyuan. He appears in the Dongshan yulu 67. See Rhythm and Song.

Zifu (Tzu-fu, Shifuku), 9-10th C. A Master of the Guiyang House of Chan which transmitted ninety-seven mandalas. In the middle of the 10th century it merged with the Linji House. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 33, 91 and Records of Serenity 25.

The Meaning of Mindfulness  
by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
Dainen-ji July 29th, 2006

Mindfulness is wordless. Mindfulness is meeting the moment as it is, moment after moment after moment, wordlessly attending to our experiencing as it actually is. It is opening to not just the fragments of our lives that we like or dislike or view as important, but the whole of our experiencing.

But what does the word "mindfulness" mean? The English word "mindfulness" - that we use - is a translation of the Pali, Sanskrit and Japanese terms, "sati", "smirti" and "nen". Another English translation of the Pali word "sati" is "memory". This is what "mindfulness" means - memory. But when I say "memory", I am not referring to the habitual crunching of attention that people engage in when they are trying to remember things past. The kind of memory I am speaking of is the capacity to remember that allows you to remember reality in this moment. It is this capacity that allows you to understand the meaning of each word I am saying as I am saying it. Without it, there would be no continuity to your experiencing whatsoever.

This capacity to remember is a "mental factor" A mental factor is a gathering or grouping of movements of attention that make up how we perceive, or can condition how we interpret what we are experiencing, depending upon whether they are open or closed. "Mindfulness of mental factors" is one of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness as taught by the Buddha in the Mahasatipattana sutta. And so to understand what the word "mindfulness" means, we need to understand what a mental factor is.

Although you might like to think that there is some "one" inside of the bodymind that is always the same, you keep changing your mind about who and what you think yourself to be. And that is because what you like to think of as "you" is not a solid entity. It is a collection of "mental" factors and this thinking about you is just a subset of them.

It's not difficult to see that you present yourself as different "selves", all depending on where you are and what is going on. The "work self", the "social self", the "organized self", the "disorganized self", the "sad self" and the "happy self" come about through the shuffling of mental factors. Yet, despite this obvious shuffling, when a mental factor is present we tend to view THIS "self" as permanent and unchanging and we will base decisions and actions on it. Small wonder we have such difficulty following through with things we set out to do. Sometimes you like your "self" and other times you are filled with self-loathing about your "self" but whether you like or dislike

whatever "self" you think your "self" to be at any given moment, one thing is sure - it will change because mental factors change.

Sadness, for example, is a mental factor, as are anger, happiness, fear, anxiety, frustration and passivity. We have many, many mental factors, a whole "database" of mental factors, all vying for first place. When "sadness" comes up, we think "Oh well, I am sad. Of course I am sad, I have always been sad. I am a sad person." Two hours later, we might be "happy" and we will think, "Oh well, of course I am happy, I have always been happy. I am a happy person." When we experience a state, we completely identify with it and so when we are "sad", we forget that we are also sometimes "happy". We don't remember the range of states we experience because we have little to no carry-over of a sense of context between states. It is because of this lack of carry-over that we can live under the delusion that there is a solid, unchanging self despite the fact that our experiencing shows us that this is not and has never been true. Who and what you seem to be in this moment is dependant on whatever mental factors there are in place. In fact, in a single moment there arise together mental factors which could become sad or happy or indifferent or eager or pensive or angry and as well factors that are processing perceptions of spatial dimension, colours, forms, weight, temperature, fragrances and on and on. As practice deepens and opens this becomes more and more obvious so the compulsion to choose and focus on one or a few of these potential feeling-tones becomes less and less interesting.

Sati, or the capacity of memory, is the dominant mental factor of mindfulness and this is what makes it possible for you to open past states of contraction. This is the heart of Zen practice, and the fundamental purpose of it: to learn to step past all of the states that we experience into who and what we truly are, which is Awareness in Itself. But to do this, we must first learn to recognize contraction and release it through practising basic mindfulness.

We have only to look at the headlines of newspapers to see the consequences of not opening past contraction. As the Roshi has often pointed out,

A moment of contraction is not a small thing. Getting lost in thought, narrowing attention and excluding reality are how crimes, wars, and the destruction of our environment have all occurred. Becoming annoyed at an old lady fumbling for change in a check-out line at a store is not different in kind than starting a war. In fact starting a war is only possible because such a moment of contraction was never noticed for what it was. Contraction leads to further contraction and all of the catastrophes of human history have followed from people following thoughts and feeling-tones and are the inevitable consequence of, for example, your attention fading in and out as you hear these words.

Mindfulness is not just "noticing" something and then covering it over with discursiveness or what we think we know about that thing - this thing means "this" and this thing means "that". It is allowing that thing to reveal itself as it is.

Allowing things to reveal themselves as they are is only possible if we continuously refresh mindfulness. We are only practicing when we are practicing; we can only practice for a split-second at a time and then we must begin anew. This is the meaning of "beginner's mind" or "shoshin"- continuously opening to the details of present experiencing as they are in this moment, beginning again in this moment... and this moment. This is the effort we must make and this is true for everyone practicing, regardless of how long they have been practicing. When our practice is truly "realized-practice" as Eihei Dogen zenji and Anzan Hoshin roshi speak of it, then this effort is simply the exertion of the whole moment itself with all of its numberless colours, forms, sounds, sensations and movements. It is not that there is no effort made but rather that there is no sense of someone making the effort.

Until then, mindfulness of the moment can be very slippery because the moment always slips away. This "moment" is not a place or a thing that you can "have". You can never lay claim to it because you arise within it along with everyone else, every thing else, everywhere. It is not a something let alone something else.

This is what we are practising when we are really practising mindfulness. We practice opening the capacity to remember reality. The contracted states we propagate are not interested in reality. When we work ourselves into a dense state of contraction because perhaps someone said something that really pissed us off, the last thing that it would normally occur to us to do would be to open to reality. Who wants to open to the richness of sensations, colours, forms, sounds, and the rest of the details that make up the reality of our lives as a whole when we can spend the next 45 minutes playing a slasher scene in the movie of "Me"? Open to reality and interrupt the movie? Not now. Not yet. Maybe later, like when I have to go to a sitting at the monastery and there's nothing else to do.

In "The Development of Buddhist Psychology" series of classes the Roshi says,

Through attending directly and openly to the process by which attention becomes distorted and seems to be contained by the states arising in it, the distortions cease just as the air held in your mouth returns to the sky when you exhale.

Something that all of the traditions of Abhidharma would agree on is that knowing is an active, changing process. Mind is considered to be the activity of individual moments of knowing.

Some traditions would hold that this mental factor cannot be present when this other one is or that all of certain factors are present in every moment of knowing (for example the seven or five universal factors). In both cases this means that mind is a process, not an entity. When attention is focused in one particular way, it excludes from view other potential factors. This is an activity. The act of focusing and engagement, of sensory knowing, cognition and so on, are each activities. Mind is a verb.

We commonly tend to behave not only as if the mind were a noun rather than a knowing, but also that that which is known is a noun, an object. A feeling of fear, anxiety, loneliness, guilt or whatever is treated as if it were a thing rather than a process. Since it is thus objectified, we behave as if we can be overcome by it or else we struggle against it.

The main thing that we can learn from the Abhidharma's teachings on the habitual patterning of the sankhara skandha is that anything that is known or felt or sensed is a process. Since it is a process, it is something that is arising from moment to moment. Since it is arising from moment to moment, anything that arises for us is workable since there is only this moment of it occurring now. There is no past, no future, and this present moment itself; a process of dynamic activity and change.

As I mentioned previously, all mental factors have sati as part of them, but it is not the dominant factor within them. By practising mindfulness, sati can become the dominant factor. What this means is that if you practice in the midst of happiness, anger, fear, anxiety, passivity and so forth, what you will discover is that any of those things (and a host of other kinds of states) can come up and you can still be mindful. This is very important because it means that regardless of the states that come up, you can know a state as a state, and you can still do what needs to be done. You can stop propagating your own craziness.

Any state that you experience that seems to occur in isolation, separate from the details of present experiencing needs to be questioned. It is not necessary to withdraw from reality in order to think a thought or feel a feeling. If it does seem necessary to withdraw, to internalize attention in order to sustain a state, it is because the state you are propagating is like some bizarre hothouse orchid that can only survive in "special conditions" and if that is the case, it deserves to die. Open around it.

When attention is open, although there might be a feeling of anger or grief or joy present, it is experienced in context - together with sensations and colours and forms and sounds. There is the knowing that there is no one inside the state, that the state is arising within Knowing. There is nobody inside the state and so there is no attempt to use the state in any way or mark off territory within the space of experiencing. Experiencing is always open and expansive and the state is known as a temporary movement within the space rather than as something solid and unchanging that must be acted out or acted upon.

Students sometimes think that if they open around a state, they will be unable to think clearly or be effective in situations that come up for them. This is simply not true. What it does mean is that instead of acting from a state of anger, or fear or confusion, one can address the situation clearly and without the distortion of feeling tones. You cannot think clearly when attention is compromised by a feeling tone and so opening around the state allows for clear, intelligent thought.

Mindfulness is not "mindfully talking to yourself" or "mindfully watching yourself. It is not about seeing thoughts and then trying to follow them to their "source". It's not about struggling with or trying to cut off thoughts and feelings, or trying to think nice, pure, clean thoughts so that we can become saintly boys and girls. It is attending to our experience as it actually is - directly, without strategy, without interpretation.

As practice continues, attention, which always and necessarily arises along with any and all mental events, becomes subtle, quicker, more spontaneous. In fact it begins to reveal itself rather than being directed. This is what the Roshi refers to as the process of attending to, and then attending with, and then attending as; or simply "attentiveness." Practising this attentiveness is releasing yourself into the sensations and colours and forms and sounds. It is letting go of the endless internalized babble of self-image to experience the bodymind and the world in which it arises - as they actually are. Attentiveness can only be surrendered into, it cannot be manipulated.

Mindfulness is wordless. Mindfulness is meeting the moment as it is, moment after moment after moment, wordlessly attending to our experiencing as it actually is. It is opening to not just the fragments of our lives that we like or dislike or view as important, but the whole of our experiencing. Thus, mindfulness is never having to say you're sorry or that you are lonely or that you are angry or sad or in love or too fat, too tall, too short, too stupid, too smart, especially to yourself. Because there's nobody there to hear you. It is the active recognition that any perceptions you have of "you" are just details rising and falling within countless other details, shifting and changing moment after moment. Mindfulness means please, please, please shut up and pay attention to this life as it really is, opening attention again and again through remembrance to some aspect of present experience in order to open past that to the context in which experiences rise and fall as such. This is the gift that has been given to me. I can only give it to you in the sense of reminding you of it. You have to give it to yourself.

Go on. You're worth it.

Have a good morning.

Measureless

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, March 3rd, 1998

Right here, right now, everything arises all around you. But nothing that arises and falls is about you. Although all around you, everything is shining and bright and rich, it cannot be measured from you to it. You and everything and everyone, including this person speaking, are just arising naturally and effortlessly as this richness beyond measure.

When we look out at everything from our ideas about who we think we are and what we think the world is, everything becomes measured from the perspective of the sense of a self that is doing the measuring. But this self is itself measured against its ideas of how it measures up against its ideas of what it should be and what the world should be. Me, you; us, them; 1, 2; good bad—everything becomes a matter of opposing things. Even body and mind become viewed as if they were matter and spirit locked in mutual conflict. But mind and body, self and other are really just ways that we have of speaking of some of the details of this richness.

When we take this sense of struggle that follows along with self-image seriously, as if it really means something, then we get into such a mess that it seems we can't find our way out. Up, down, front, back, what to do next, what we should do, can do, are capable of doing, all become incredibly complex problems.

We feel inadequate. Everything is too big, too hard, too insignificant, too difficult.

Why should we brush our teeth? Forget it. Who cares. Too much trouble. But when we meet someone we think, "Omgod. If I smile I'll look like a geek!"

If we take care of what is around us, what actually presents itself as the measureless richness, the Treasury of Reality, we only do so because of what someone else thinks of us.

Or, really, what WE think someone else thinks of us and what we think about that.

We measure ourselves against our image of how we think everyone else is. We think, "Oh, they have it all together. They know what's what. Look at them. They're happy and purposeful and sane. And here I am afraid to smile because I was too busy with feeling stupid to brush my teeth."

But let me tell you. From my experience of what I have seen about myself and all of you (without naming names other than mine), we ALL tend to feel like that.

Which of course means that everyone's image of themselves measured against everyone else is all the same old stuff. Just images, pictures, stories, without substance.

Of course it all seems to be solid. Self-image is a contraction of attention, a knot of Knowing that pretends to be a knower, so solidity is a major preoccupation of self-image.

But everything is just open, just rising and falling.

This rising and falling, Zen Master Anzan Hoshin reminds us, does not come FROM anywhere or go TO anywhere. It just rises and falls and there is no "it". We are just dancing in freefall.

When we sit up STRAIGHT in zazen, we can feel the falling, the coming and going of how we are.

We might want to say, "NO! STOP! How am I doing?!! Am I doing this RIGHT!?!"

But it doesn't matter.

We just don't know.

Our image of how we are, of how we measure up to our idea of how we should be is just more stuff. I recently spoke with someone who wanted to know how long it would take to become Ino or Godo. What could I say? The person wanted to know how many years this or that took. Trying to find my way in the morass of these opinions and viewpoints I could only talk about the importance of this moment. Perhaps this doesn't measure up to what Bodhidharma, Dogen zenji or Zen Master Anzan Hoshin would say. But I know that it is true.

Let us all start from right here, right now. From where we are. And uncover who we are. Measureless, radiant. And awake.

Not Fade Away

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, April 25th, 2009

The world arises all around you in the ten directions, as the ten directions. Close your eyes, squeeze them tight, it's still there. Look around, it's all around. It is your looking, your hearing, your breathing. It is this breath. It is the inbreath, the outbreath. It is the pause between breathing in and out.

You can seem to cut yourself off from the world by inverting attention, by sinking deeper and deeper into a state, but there is nowhere that you can go inside of yourself that leaves you anywhere else but here. Right here. All sunken and shrunken and pretty funny looking to all of us

out here. However, the habit of withdrawing into an internalized world of considerations and opinions and stances and strategies is so strong that people often don't realize that they are doing this. But the more that you allow attention to invert and withdraw from reality, the more you fade away.

You could ask why, but asking why won't help. Why is not the point. That's like asking why it rains when the real question is 'how does it rain'? How do you fade? What is actually taking place when you hang back? How do you go from being awake and alert to sinking so much that you have no idea why you are sitting there, or even that you ARE sitting there? How does that happen? What do you notice about it? Don't fade away. Look at the question.

How about when you are in the midst of doing a form? Bowing in the doorway of the Hatto is an opportunity to open to whole-bodily sensation, to release any quality of rushing or distraction by fully paying attention to the details of the form. But half-way through the bow you've already faded from the form, blurring the motions together without noticing; closing the door without feeling into its weight, how it moves; stepping into the room without feeling the step.

Or when you are taking your seat? Are you paying attention to each detail of the form? Stepping onto the zabuton, lowering yourself into seiza, are you feeling the weight and balance of the bodymind? Are you feeling the body sitting in a kneeling posture? Are you feeling into the sensations as you make the transition from kneeling to taking your seat on the zafu? Or is it comfy cushion time as you reach behind you, pick up the zafu like it's a pillow and give it an affectionate pat to flatten it, ready to receive your backside? In doing that, you've faded from the form. You've made it into something familiar and comfortable instead of using it as an opportunity to practise whole-bodily.

You may begin a chant with good volume and careful attention to timing, but not long into practising the chant, perhaps after the first line or the first few words, you're fading. [fake chant:] "Aaaaaaalll beeeings (mumble) widout numner." You may start internalizing attention, thinking about something else while simultaneously making sounds with your mouth; your volume will drop and you are no longer paying attention to the timing. Or you may be shouting, completely oblivious to the fact that you are just shouting over the chanting leader and oblivious to everyone else but yourself. You have faded from reality and while you may not be noticing this, it is very noticeable to those around you, particularly to your Teachers.

Exertion in practice is releasing -- releasing habitual knots of attention that present themselves as contacted, self-absorbed states. But exerting oneself does not mean to push either. Releasing is much simpler than pushing or falling into states of glazed apathy. It is actively releasing attention into sensations and colours and forms and sounds. It is not manipulating attention by suppressing thoughts or feelings; it is not attempting to cultivate a state of mindfulness or quiet or some other state that you think makes you a better student, nor is it giving up. It is choosing to open to reality BY opening to reality -- these colours and forms and sounds and sensations and the space of the

room you are sitting in.

How many times in your life have you made mistakes, small, medium, huge mistakes, because you had allowed yourself to fade from reality, because you were not really present to the whole of your life with the whole of the bodymind, with the whole of your intelligence? So many bad life decisions are made because attention is bound within feelingtones, superstitious thinking, broken belief systems. What can you do about the traps you fall into? Practise opening to the freshness of intelligence by staying with what is most true of your experiencing in this moment. As Anzan Hoshin roshii once said, "There are ten thousand ways of interpreting experience. Don't buy into any of them".

In daisan and practice interviews, you need to exert yourself to make use of the opportunity to receive instruction. When asked, "How is your practice?", you need to communicate your experience as clearly as possible. Don't fade away, step up.

"But I don't know what the question means."

It means, "how is your practice?". You know, practice? The thing you are here to do, what you practice while sitting on the zafu. You've been given clear instructions about this: Feel the breath, the tanden, the sensations of the whole body, opening to seeing and hearing. Release habitual patterns of attention, the states and storylines and feelingtones that you usually indulge in. That practice. The same practice you should be doing while sitting in front of the Dharma Teacher or practice advisor who is asking you the question. The practice you should be speaking FROM during daisan and practice interviews. As far as content goes, you could talk about your experience of practising in that moment, which is of the greatest importance, but you could also talk about your experience of sitting before you were called, or you could talk about how you practised with something you noticed while practising a week ago. But as you speak about whatever it is you are speaking about, practise. Feel the breath, the tanden, the whole bodymind, feel the tongue against the teeth, feel and hear the breath becoming sound, open to peripheral vision and hearing.

Don't sink back, retracting attention away from the reality of this moment. When students do that, it can be seen as well as felt. It is like seeing someone fall into a swoon, and yet they are still sitting upright, looking at you. But glazed, so glazed. Sunk into a state of dullness and apathy and refusing to lift themselves out of it, refusing to exert themselves. Too taxed to sit on a zafu? Too faint to have a conversation? And yet, after a sitting I see the same students stride out the door, full of energy. You give yourself away in so many ways.

In other situations, instead of speaking plainly, honestly, there may be an agenda running in the background. In this instance a student might answer the question "how is your practice" with something like "It's fine". That might be code for "I don't want to talk about it" or "I can't be bothered to talk about it" or "I have no idea what to say", but it isn't "fine". Whether this is

commented on or not, it is clearly seen and felt. As are other forms of reactivity that come up, such as "you're not the boss of me"; "you really don't understand me", and "you're invading my privacy". Feh. Your "privacy" is your prison. When you have a practice interview or daisan, you are speaking with monastics who have dedicated their lives to this practice. Open to context. There is no "his" and "hers" and "my things" and "your things" in this context. The only context is practice so don't create opposition where there is none.

I've been wagging my finger enough at you, so here's a little story.

A long long time ago, in a Zendo not far away in distance but in time, a cascade of dead leaves fell about my head and shoulders, falling on my black robes and zabuton. I had just long enough to wonder where they were coming from when the Roshi's voice cut through my confusion. Standing directly behind me, he said "When you let the ikebana wither, you let your life wither."

OHHH...

The ikebana!

I'll rewind a little to explain why the Roshi was dropping dead leaves on my head. A task I was given many years ago as a postulant monk was to clean a small black laquered offering table that stood in a front corner of the Zendo at Zazen-ji. On this table stood an ikebana and three small white stones he placed in a very precise pattern. Every morning my task was to dust the table. That sounds simple enough, but this involved taking the ikebana and the stones off the table, dusting it, and then putting everything back as he had arranged them. And I was also to remove any dead leaves from the ikebana. And one day I didn't really look at what I was doing. And so I sat with dead leaves on my head.

When you commit yourself to doing something every day, it means every day. It means doing it whether you feel like it or not; it means being interested despite disinterest; it means opening around reluctance and recoil and refusal by paying attention to detail.

When you are sitting zazen, all of the same states that you fall into when you are doing anything else will present themselves. The ways in which you retract attention from reality, how you distract yourself with storylines about hope and fear, how you sink and ignore, glaze and make yourself stupid, roil about in contraction and confusion -- all of these will come up. And these are all the ways in which you wither and fade away.

This is spring, there is a haze of green buds, leaves unfurling before we have noticed. After a long, cold winter, spring is so beautiful and yet so brief, and we want spring to last, but it doesn't. Nothing lasts. Everything eventually fades away. Everything we think important, all of the people we love, our pets, our favourite hat and shoes, our favourite song and the contraption we used to play it on, the streets and buildings around us, everything we have known, will eventually decay

and fade away. It all changes because all that is, is coming and going. A branch buds and at the same time a star is forming in a molecular cloud being compressed by the tidal forces of other molecular clouds orbiting the galaxy. You breathe this breath and at the same time, countless beings breathe their last breath. You breathe again and again and now it's time for your last breath. Oh. Too late. Better luck next time.

In the midst of all of this coming and going within vast space, here you are in the space of this room, in the space of your experiencing. Reality's fading is part of how it presences. As Roshi often says, "It's coming is its going, its going is its coming." Reality itself never fades, never tires, never exhausts itself. Its richness is always presencing as our lives, for as long as our little lives last. As long as your life lasts, please don't fade away from your life.

## Opening the Bowls

Dharma Assembly led by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, February 26, 2004

Some 14 years ago [now 27 years ago, in 1990], Zen Master Anzan Hoshin took me into the Zendo at our previous monastery Zazen-ji and gave me instruction in oryoki practice. He did not say very much about oryoki beforehand, because it is really something that one needs to do to understand, just as zazen must be done to be understood. Anzan Hoshin roshi and Joshu Dainen daiosho's translation of Eihei Dogen zenji's "Fushukuhanpo", which you were all asked to read, contains a great deal of information about oryoki, so I will keep this Dharma Talk quite brief. One thing that Roshi did say to me is that eventually, when lifting the fuhatsu or Buddha bowl, the first bowl, and concluding the chant, I would find that is a very tender, vulnerable, powerful, and profound moment. I could understand what he meant by how he said it and it was not long before I knew it directly. And experience it whenever I even say the word "oryoki".

The word "oryoki" is interesting. "O" means "honourable" or to be "considered with respect". "Ryo" means "quantity" and "ki" means "bowls". So the word means "the sacred holds-enough bowls." What is in the bowls, as with every meal, makes your life possible. But the forms of oryoki show you endless possibilities of opening.

Oryoki is not an informal practice in that it is not a more casual form of practice. It is eating while practising zazen, in the same way that the movements of establishing the posture of zazen and clarifying the them in each moment by practicing whole bodily while sitting are part of the practice of zazen. It is not "informal practice", by which I mean that it is not just one of the ways we attempt to integrate our practice outside of zazen. It might be compared to chanoyu, or the Japanese tea

ceremony in that chanoyu derived from oryoki and conducting oneself while having chasen or tea with a Zen Master. The tea ceremony and other such practices originated with lay students observing monks doing oryoki but standing outside of it and observing and so because of this the tea service is much more concerned with appearances, with how it looks and how one is seen, than it is with the actual practice of opening to Openness.

The forms of our practice - how we sit, how we stand, the posture of zazen, kinhin, bowing, chanting, and oryoki practice are all based on the deportment of the Buddha and the Awakened Ancestors. They have been adapted and have evolved over the centuries as the circumstances in which practitioners found themselves changed, but they have never lost their purpose, which is to show us how our attention is and make it possible for us to recognize contracted states of attention and release them. When we open the bowls, we open to how we are and can manifest who we are.

The first monastics who practiced with the Buddha in India did not do oryoki practice as we know it today. They each had one bowl, went on begging rounds once a day, and were completely dependant on the generosity of lay people to fill them.

In a teisho entitled "The Work of the Way" from the "Turning the Wheel" series of teisho, Zen Master Anzan Hoshin says,

When the Dharma was transmitted across the deserts and mountains and seas to China by monks doing the work of the Way, everything was quite different. The climate was different, the economies of the culture were different, the landscape was different, and the language was different. One of the basic characteristics of Chinese culture is its practicality. And so the robes changed, the monastic procedures changed, and even some of the ways of speaking of the Dharma changed. At first, Indian and Chinese monks tried to observe the rule not to eat after midday. But the days were long and the nights were cold and they were hungry and falling ill. So in the evenings, instead of eating some rice, some soup, and some pickles they heated up stones, wrapped them in cloth, and held them over their stomachs to cure the ache. These stones were called "medicine stones." Of course, the stones did little to cure the ache and so soon the Chinese simply ate some rice, soup, and pickles which is the origin of the Japanese term "yakuseki" for evening oryoki meals. I'm not sure how long it took them to substitute three smaller bowls for the single large Indian-styled bowl and to use hashi instead of their fingers. Probably not very long. The Chinese like to eat but I don't think they would have been too impressed with words of wisdom spoken by somebody with mashed rice, soup, and pickles all over their fingers.

When we engage in intensive practice, we are opening to the spaciousness of experiencing: a vast space of sensations, colours, forms, and sounds. Each sensation, each colour, each form, each sound, is completely empty of any of our thoughts or feelings about it. Openness is so open that it does not need us to mediate or clutter it up with our thoughts or feelings about it.

The bowls you will be holding in your hands are also this emptiness. But this can only be experienced if we open attention past the usual reference points of association. We will not just be "having dinner together". How we handle our bowls and utensils, each detail of the forms of oryoki are points of mindfulness, each point pointing to the emptiness and vastness of all things.

When we are practicing oryoki, we are not only feeding the bodymind the nutrients needed to sustain our practice, we are also directly feeding our practice by opening to the vast expanse of Awakened Awareness which we all hunger for whether we know it or not.

So now I will explain how this introduction to oryoki practice will be structured.

We are going to sit until 11:30. There will be daisan or interviews, no verbal instruction on oryoki. Just sitting.

At 11:30, we will all proceed to the Zendo, where you will observe as monastics do oryoki for their lunch meal. There will be no discussion during this time as the best way for you to get a sense of what this practice is and how it is done is to simply observe it in progress. Also, Roshi has said he doesn't want you to find yourself drowning in the midst of trying to flail through it with a majority of other people also flailing. Instead, you can just watch. But keep your vision open, see the whole activity instead of focusing on little details. We will be demonstrating what is called "formal service" for you and so there are two monks who will serve the food.

Following this, at around 12:00, Dharma Assembly participants will have lunch in the Dining Hall and you will be given three bowls. Chunen angya and Mishin godo will give you instruction in holding your bowls, using the hashi and spoon, and other basic forms that you will need instruction in.

Following lunch, there will be time to do the dishes and have a free period, but we will resume again at 2:00 instead of 3:00. From 2:00 until 5:30 you will meet with myself and the three practice advisors in groups for instruction in opening, laying out and closing oryoki sets.

At 5:30, for yakuseki or supper, we will all do oryoki practice in the Zendo and two of the monastics will serve the food.

The evening sitting will begin at 7:30 and there will be daisan and practice interviews for participants.

This Dharma Assembly will give all of you enough instruction that you can participate in scheduled oryoki practice in future. To give you an idea of how this might take place I will mention a possibility now: On Saturday mornings, those who have received oryoki instruction can attend the 6:00 a.m. sitting and then stay for oryoki breakfast, which would be served in the Zendo following

the associate sitting. Ongoing oryoki instruction might replace the Daruma-kata classes now scheduled since the kata are practiced every morning following formal sittings. Other opportunities will present themselves and as the Sangha grows, scheduled oryoki meals will take place more and more often.

So now I will stop talking and we will all sit.

Opening Traps and Cages, Part One

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, September 25, 2010

In the "Fukanzazengi" by Eihei Dogen zenji, translated by Anzan Hoshin roshi and Joshu Dainen roshi as "How Everyone Can Sit", it says of the practice of zazen, "Traps and cages spring open."

The first time I heard this phrase, many years ago, one of the first thoughts that came up for me was that it wasn't true. If it were true that by just practising traps and cages can spring open, then what about people sitting in prisons, confined by concrete and steel? This statement "traps and cages spring open" seemed to me to be fraught with contradictions and at the time I resolved this by coming to the conclusion that it must just refer to practising with the usual run-of-the-mill states such as anger or confusion or sadness. But now, twenty years later, I understand it in a completely different way. What this phrase is pointing to is true, and it is true of all situations, in all places, and all times.

So what about the millions of people who are incarcerated around the world? In some instances these are people who have committed crimes of such severity that it was necessary to separate them from society, but in so many cases they have been incarcerated for political reasons, or for breaking religious codes, for simply breaking laws in order to feed their families and on and on and on. In the United States and Canada we have emptied our mental institutions and many of these people have ended up in prisons where they do not receive adequate care. In some countries children are incarcerated with their mothers, without adequate nutrition, medical care or sanitation. And I will spare you the details but will mention the forced confessions obtained through confining prisoners in isolation cells for extended periods of time, torture of every imaginable kind and even mock executions designed to produce the most excruciating terror. And there is the stunning list of ways in which human beings are actually executed in 58 countries around the world: lethal injection and the electric chair, death by firing squad, hanging, beheading and

stoning. Stoning, by the way, is still within the penal codes of ten countries.

So what does our practice have to do with any of this? How do these traps and cages spring open? Now again, I am not saying that there aren't situations in which someone breaks a law and must be kept away from other people. But we live in a world in which expressing political views can lead to imprisonment and possibly execution. A world in which - in some countries, there are stonings and beheadings for crimes that in many other countries we would not consider to even be 'crimes' at all.

At the mention of these topics, I am sure most of you in this room believe that these situations I am speaking of have absolutely nothing to do with you. Well they do. They have everything to do with all of us. We are none of us separate from each other. We are not separate from the world around us.

Most of us here today have never looked out through the steel bars of a prison cells and hopefully never will. We don't even see prisons for the most part, as they are built in more secluded areas. We might read about the prison systems in our own country from time to time. We might read about the atrocious judicial practices of other countries, but because it's all 'somewhere else' or 'over there' we tend to view these 'misfits' and 'unfortunates' as having nothing to do with us and think that there is nothing we can do about them. But this leaves out all of the detail of what all of this actually is and how it happens.

Breaking a law does not come first. What comes first is the patterns of attention that give rise to forms of behaviour that are unacceptable to society. The creation of absurd laws, building prisons and then imprisoning people in them because they have broken these absurd laws does not come first. What comes first is the structures and patterns of attention that lead to viewing others as something 'other', something threatening, something that must be stifled. Torture, electric chairs, lethal injections and nooses do not come first. What comes first is patterns of attention that lead to the presumption of a self with a set of beliefs that justify torture and execution.

The patterns of attention I am referring to are the fabrications of self-image, the image we have of ourselves and the world. The materials prisons are constructed from, concrete and steel, are the final physical manifestations of the traps and cages created by self-image.

Traps and cages can take many, many forms. Feeling 'trapped' by a job, or viewing oneself as 'caged' in a marriage are certainly not uncommon situations to find oneself in. But again, it is not the job or the marriage that creates the cage or the trap. It is the movements and structures of attention that give rise to behaviours that lead to those situations. Being in a state, whether it is a state of dukkha, of feeling that everything is unsatisfactory; being in a state of anger or confusion - no matter what the configuration is, how these come about is through movements and structures of attention that create the sense of being trapped by them.

When we practise opening attention, we are practising with the very roots of all of these mechanisms that give rise to the very worst of human behaviour in the world. Whether we are looking at our injustice towards each other or the petty bullshit you have to put up with at the office, or how you broadcast your bad mood to your partner at the end of the day, what all of these have in common is a set of presumptions that have built on other presumptions, which have built on yet more presumptions, that have piled up and have become a whole set of belief systems. These belief systems are precisely what make people feel justified in speaking to and behaving towards others as though they were 'other' or even sub-human. They are what makes it possible for someone to torture another human being, whether it be with words and attitudes, or by acting it out in an extreme form of brutal punishment.

When you practise opening attention you are doing everything you can to be human. In the simplest and most direct way, you are allowing attention to fall open to what is most true of your experiencing, which is beyond presumptions and belief systems. You are practising the ability to see and hear and feel into the world around you. And when you do this, you can so easily understand that your thoughts and feelings about yourself and the world are just that - thoughts and feelings. Like and dislike flicker and change like a flame on a candle and there is room for them to come and go without acting them out. There is room to question into what is being experienced, to listen and learn and make intelligent choices instead of being swept along by the momentum of compulsion and habit.

If you look at what is going on in the world, you see an enormous tangled mess of war, mismanagement, irresponsible environmental policies, and on and on. You could look at this tangled ball of stuff and wonder where the original knot is, where it all really started. Where it all started was in moment-to-moment choices made by countless beings. You can trace back the historical details of any of these issues but you won't find the causes there because the actual causes were not noticed as they were occurring. They occurred as collective movements of attention, agreements made between people acting out similar movements of attention, reinforcing patterns of attention and then giving them names, making policies and laws out of them.

And don't you do the same thing? When you identify with a pattern of attention, you think there is nothing outside of that pattern. You think it's true. The more contracted a state is, the denser it is, the more that attention seems to be trapped within a structure arising within it, the more it seems to be true. You feel angry and you think you are completely justified in being angry. Or perhaps you're angry and you think maybe you're not completely justified, but you're angry enough that you continue to feed the anger. You feel resentful, confused, sad, and while any of these states is going on, you think that they actually mean something about you, that that is who you are. And very often you're convinced enough that you would say or do something to make sure others 'outside' of you know that that is who you are. You'll even campaign for support about these states by talking with other people about them so that they can help you propagate them. In short, the last thing you want to do is to let go of them, even if they hurt you; even if they hurt the people around you.

How do you know what is true, moment by moment? How do you release yourself from traps and cages? We release ourselves again and again, in each moment, in this moment of being aware, by attending to our experiencing as it actually is. Each detail that is noticed stands out distinctly as what it is. The sound of a bird; a drop of rain falling on your head; the coolness of the air on your skin; the changing light in the room; the myriad sensations of the body - all of these present themselves just as they are. Each colour and form, each sound, each sensation is telling you what is true. And when we practise this coming back again and again to what is true in each moment, the ways in which we lie to ourselves, inflate and propagate and trick ourselves, stand out clearly.

In each moment we can choose to open traps and cages. The more that we enter fully into and as this moment the more that they spring open of themselves. When we have entered completely we will see that there has never been anything to entrap us.

This is the first Dharma Talk of a series. I will be returning to this topic.

## The Point of the Posture And What It Points To

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, January 28th, 2006

What is the point of the posture of zazen?

To learn to open past what you think of as "you";

To learn to step past all of the states you believe yourself to be

Into who and what you truly are,

Awareness in Itself.

What does the posture point to?

The posture points to Awareness in Itself.

Why don't you already know this?

You do. But you choose to ignore it.

The Hatto is filled with students this morning and we all sit in the posture of zazen. It is very quiet in the room, with students sitting facing the wall, balanced and aligned, without moving.

That is how it looks, but that's not all that's going on. It seems very quiet, but I know that there are

actually many storylines being spun even as I speak. Some of you are having conversations with yourselves about what I am saying and so you cannot even hear what I am saying.

There is an appearance of balance and alignment, but some of you are already uncomfortable even though you've only been sitting for a few minutes.

And so although it may seem quite still in the room, there are already some subtle and not so subtle movements going on here and there - someone rocking very slightly; toes flex, a foot shuffles just a little, a small shift of the head - subtle callisthenics to relieve perceived tension in the neck. Some of us understand the importance of simply sitting still. Others who have not been practicing for quite as long are not as clear about this. In ten or fifteen minutes the little "corrections" going on around the room will become more and more obvious as students begin to argue with themselves about how their posture "should" be.

Now we might think that these little movements - the shuffling of a foot a slight rocking motion or the continuous movements generated by arguing with oneself over one's posture are okay because we are sitting and we're just "trying to get it right" or some such thing, but they're not okay. As our Teacher, Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi often says "If you move while sitting zazen, you simply haven't sat. You've just been sitting around instead of practising a round of zazen."

One of the most important things that we are practising when we sit is the posture itself. The posture of zazen lets the body sit as the body itself instead of holding it captive to our usual states, thoughts, feelings and storylines. Ordinarily, when we experience a state of sadness or anger or confusion, whether alone or with other people, we act it out with the body by doing such things as physically tightening, allowing the spine to collapse, sighing, fidgeting, grimacing, rocking, shifting, twitching, pursing the lips, clenching the teeth or going slack-jawed, narrowing the eyes, twiddling our thumbs and on and on and on. A thought, a feeling, even the memory of something that happened 30 minutes or 30 years ago can express itself bodily and when we do this what we are doing is reinforcing the state.

When we sit in zazen, what the posture points to is not what you ordinarily think of as "you", which is a collection of habits and tendencies. In fact, your whole life points to the fact that it is not about you and never has been. The posture of zazen is very simple and very clear. The point of the posture is to sit in the reality of this moment. The posture points to the open space of reality all around and within and as the bodymind.

Let's start at the very beginning, the beginning of the sitting round. You have a minute or so to arrange your posture and you must do this mindfully because you cannot "fix" it later. Once everyone is settled and the room is quiet, we begin the sitting round with the set of forms all students are instructed to use: We bow forward and exhale; we straighten and inhale; we settle into balance point.

Everything is positioned as well as you can position it. You are sitting up straight, nose over the navel, ears over the shoulders, balanced and aligned. Your hands are resting in the mudra, with all of the fingers in full contact with one another, the thumbs forming a gentle arch.

Now stay like that.

No movement for the next 30 minutes: No fidgeting, no fixing anything, no changing posture. Sit still. If you don't move out of alignment, there's nothing to fix, no corrections to be made.

Anything, any thought, any feeling, any impulse, any idea, any movement of attention, any reactivity that causes you to begin to move at all needs to be noticed and released immediately. The only way that you can do that is if you are feeling into the sensations of the body from the beginning of your sitting round, and moment after moment, doing this continuously for the next 30 minutes. This means you will need to refresh your practice again and again and again and again and again. It means that you have to actually pay attention with each breath. This is what practice is - continuous mindfulness of whole-bodily experience, opening to the seeing and hearing. This is not the time to think about anything, let alone think about how you feel about anything. It requires that you make an effort to open past thoughts and feeling tones.

An occasional adjustment to the posture such as straightening the spine a little or realigning the mudra is acceptable, but this shouldn't be necessary more than two or three times during a half-hour sitting round even if you are very tired. Again, if you are continuously feeling into the sensations of the body, releasing any states, thoughts or feelings that begin to pull the bodymind out of alignment as soon as they come up, you won't go out of alignment in the first place, so there is no need to constantly adjust your posture.

The 18th case of the Hekiganroku or Blue Cliff Records says,

A monk asked Xianglin, "What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the West?"

Xianglin said, "Sitting for a long time, becoming tired."

The meaning of the Ancestor's coming from the west is a traditional phrase that refers to the Transmission of the practice of the realization of the Dharma. Why did Bodhidharma travel all of the way from India to China? In order to transmit the Dharma. So the question really asks, "What is the essence of the Dharma?"

Master Xianglin is saying that the essence of the Dharma is to be found in zazen, in, "Sitting for a long time" even when tired.

There is a difference between being genuinely physically exhausted and allowing oneself to fall into sinking mind. For the most part what students experience is not physical exhaustion, it is just

sinking mind. How do I know this? Because I have observed students glazing, allowing their posture to collapse and so forth. And then have found that when I see them in a hallway no more than two or three minutes following a sitting, they are all chipper, walking normally, smiling brightly, not displaying the least sign of the supposedly mind-numbing exhaustion they were commiserating with themselves about only minutes before.

Sinking mind is not limited to states of fatigue, of course. It is a passivity that causes us to internalize attention. We become passive, when we stop paying attention to the fact that that we are sitting and instead turn attention to what Eihei Dogen zenji described as our "circles of self-concern". We have turned away from the vividness of experiencing by propagating the very states we should be opening around if we want to Wake Up.

When we are following a train of thought, we are not choosing. We are following compulsion. Only choosing to open is an actual choice.

Right now we can make the choice to open by practicing the posture and by paying attention to what the posture is pointing to. As I speak, we sit in posture in the Hatto or Dharma Hall of the monastery. The room is warm, clean and spacious and everything about it supports us in our efforts to practice clearly. We have no justification for wasting this opportunity to practice.

We are most fortunate to be able to sit in these conditions. In other places around the world there are practitioners who presently sit in much less favourable conditions. In the past, countless students have sat in conditions that we would find untenable, but they did sit. And it is because they did that the Teachings we receive in this time and place are available to any who would make space in their lives for them.

Our own Teacher, Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi himself sat in conditions that we would find unimaginably difficult when he was training as a student of our grandfather in Dharma, Joshu Dainen Hakukaze Daiocho. Anzan Hoshin roshi and the students who trained alongside him sat in an unheated barn known as "the Barndo" at Hakukaze-ji, the monastery Joshu Dainen roshi established on a piece of farmland in Southern Ontario. It was bitterly cold in the winter, and the wind whipped through the spaces between the boards. In the summer the heat of the sun made the stench of mouse urine and similar ingredients "so strong your eyes would sting" as Roshi has said.

One of the people who trained with Anzan Hoshin roshi, who was also a student of Joshu Dainen roshi, was a monk named "Endon". Recently Endon recounted a story about sitting at Hakukaze-ji in some correspondence with me, which he gave me permission to read to you. Endon wrote about Joshu Dainen roshi,

I was feeling very sad, cold, and lonely one day (well, not just the one day but on this day). Roshi was doing jundo (making the round in the Barndo during gyotan when we're sitting facing

outwards and all come to gassho as he passes). As he approached I came to gassho.

Roshi stopped in front of me, turned, and stood there for a while.

Then he yelled, "You have strength to lift arms. Lucky. For now. One day, no strength. Then dead." After a pause he said, "You understand?"

I said "Yes".

He said, "No. Dead. You know 'dead'? Dead."

I said, "I know."

He said, "You don't know. But you will."

I said "Yes".

He said, "I am cheering you up. Are you happier?"

I said "Yes".

Roshi said, "No. But, happy or sad, alive or dead, if you can lift arms you can wake up and be Buddha, neh?"

I said "Yes".

He said, "You don't understand." Then he came very close to me and said softly, "I mean it. You have strength. Can lift arms. Can sit. Not fall over. Lucky for now. Wake up."

Then he continued the jundo.

For now, we are lucky. We have the strength to lift our arms, to sit up straight, and to pay attention to our lives as they really are. Which includes all kinds of things we would rather avoid but will never be able to: illness, aging and decay, pain, death. We are lucky, for now, because we now have the opportunity to practise reality through zazen and the continuous practice of mindfulness provided by the forms and the practice environment. We have access to Teachers and practice advisors and a nice white wall to sit in front of.

But because our attention tends to be so heavy-handed we can easily poison the vividness and richness of our own experience through discursiveness. When we become lost in internalized imagery, and sink into wave after wave of feeling tones the body tends to be pulled forward, to collapse, to harden. But we have forms for working with these things so that we can release the coarse effects of our slumping with body and mind. The posture itself is a form which continuously

points to and opens into the natural dignity and clarity and ease of the structure and capacities of bodymind. Practising the posture, we attend to the whole moment using the breath as a touchstone. We touch the breath and then use it to open to what is arising all around us.

Right now and throughout this Dharma Assembly, let us use the time we have to practice the posture and make ourselves available to what the posture is pointing to: that each and every sensation and sound and colour and form and experience is the Radiance of the Luminosity of Knowing in Itself.

Nothing we think or feel is more important than reality.

Have a good morning.

The Posture of Zazen

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

in "Four Gates of Zen," 1987

Zazen is the practice of attending to experience as it presents itself, with and as the whole bodymind. While the mind may wander off into thoughts of the past, interpretations of the present, and speculations concerning the future, the body is always right here and right now. Thus, zazen begins with the body practicing an upright and attentive posture.

The main point of zazen posture is to attend, and not to merely take on or force the body into a particular position in order to look or feel "holy" or "like a Buddha". Dogen zenji says in the Fukanzazengi: How Everyone Can Sit, "You cannot fabricate Buddha through sitting or lying down". You take a strong, stable, and open posture to practice, to open to your actual experience, to understand yourself, to enter and manifest the Unborn nature, and realize yourself as Buddha. Making a "big deal" out of it by dreading a difficult posture or romanticizing it is all unnecessary.

The bodily posture should be balanced, grounded, and open. The full lotus (kekka-fuza), or half lotus (hanka-fuza) are optimal for this posture of an aware bodymind and so you could experiment with those first.

Turn to sit facing a blank wall. Sit on the front edge of a zafu (round meditation cushion) or any thick and firm cushion that you might have at hand; if you sit too far back you will put too much

pressure on the back of the thighs and cut off circulation. Rest the knees on a zabuton (flat padded mat) or blanket so that the knees and buttocks form a tripod of support for the upper body. Lift up one ankle with the hands and pull it up onto the thigh of the opposite leg; the line of the toes should align with the outside line of the thigh. It really doesn't matter very much which leg is uppermost. Allow the foot to rest in the hollow of the thigh and then try to bring the other foot up to the same position on the other thigh. Bring the feet in as close as is possible. This is the full lotus posture or padma asana. If this is uncomfortable, then bring up only one foot and tuck the other underneath the leg. This is the half lotus.

You will probably experience some discomfort after holding this posture for a while. Stop "holding it" and just sit with it. The idea of the discomfort is much worse than the actual sensations. As you continue to practice, the body will settle into the posture, ligaments will become more flexible, tension held in the hips, thighs and calves will release, and the posture will become not only comfortable but will have a steady, joyous quality. Basic stretching exercises will be helpful in alleviating undue stress on the muscles and increasing flexibility. Sit in the posture at any opportunity: to read, listen to music, and so on.

If neither the full nor half-lotus postures are suitable as yet, you can simply take the "Burmese" or agura posture in which the knees contact the zabuton and one ankle is placed in front of the other.

If this is not suitable, sit in seiza (a formal kneeling posture) on the zafu with the knees spread and the big toes of each foot in contact, left over right, behind the zafu. Again, keep the knees about four fists apart so that there is a grounded quality to the posture.

If you have severe back or knee problems you may certainly also use a chair or stool; in this case sit well away from the back of the chair with the feet flat on the ground. If you are very ill, you may practice by lying on your back with your hands over the hara in the shashu mudra, the right hand folded to form a fist with the left hand placed over the right, the left thumb tucked into the fist.

The hands can also help us to practice zazen. Put the right hand palm up so that the wrist is resting on the right thigh, and, if you are in the full-lotus posture, the backs of the knuckles are on the upturned heel of the foot. In Burmese or agura posture the backs of the wrists should rest on the upper inner thighs. Place the left hand so that the knuckles fit behind the knuckles of the right. Bring the blades of the hands in against the tanden (the area of the lower belly four finger widths below the navel) and allow the thumbs to touch lightly in a natural arch above the palms.

This is the hokkai-join, or dharmadhatu-mudra which means the "gesture of reality". The mudra will help you to notice how you are. We should be aware of whatever mental state arises as it arises; however, if we were able to do this completely, we wouldn't need to start with feeling the breath. Mental states and bodily states arise together as bodymind is not separate. Therefore, bodily states can remind us to recognize our mental state. If mindfulness dulls, the hands will slide forward and the thumbs will drop. If your practice is judgmental and goal-oriented, the thumbs will press against each other tensely. A stable and open bodily posture is a manifestation of a stable and open mental posture.

Now open the shoulder blades and any tension being held in the shoulders. Straighten the head and draw the chin back slightly. Exhale and bow forward from the hips toward the wall, keeping the body aligned. Slowly straighten again while inhaling. You should find that the pelvic area has thrust forward slightly and that there is a very slight concave to the lower back. This will support your back. You do not need to tense your shoulders or try to somehow hold yourself straight with your chest. When your posture is aligned correctly in this way, the upper part of the body should feel almost weightless and the lower part extremely grounded and settled.

Exhale deeply through the mouth and place the tongue against the palate, with the lips and teeth now closed. This will create a slight vacuum in the mouth and so the gathering of saliva in the mouth will be decreased.

Place the eye gaze about one-third up from the bottom of the wall to your own height and allow a soft gaze; that is to say, do not stare or focus on the wall, but let the gaze fall "through" the wall and be open to peripheral vision. Do not keep the eyes wide open, or you will be easily distracted. Do not close the eyes or you will be scattered in the random hypnogogic colours and images that arise, or you will become dull and sleepy.

The body is the mirror of the present moment.

In this posture, just sit.

### The Posture of the Breath

Like thoughts, the breath comes and goes. If anger arises, the breath becomes angry. If sadness arises, the breath sighs. If your practice is tense, the breath is tense. Attend to the rising and falling movements of the lower belly as the breath fills and releases. Each breath is fresh, new - you have never breathed this breath before. The breath is a touchstone through which you can bring body and mind together in the same time: here, now.

Just feeling the breath itself, abandon notions of the breath. Don't even "watch" or "follow" the breathing. Just feel this breath. When you wander into discursiveness and get lost in thoughts, return to just this breath. When mindfulness darkens or sinks, return to just this breath. Practice free from struggle. Don't tense the belly around the breath to make sure you are watching it and thus take on the stance of a "watcher". Don't try to manufacture deep, calm breaths. Just breathe

as you breathe. With this breath, you enter into your life.

The breath is a mirror of the mind.

In this posture of breath, just sit.

### The Posture of the Mind

As you sit, the mind takes on various postures or stances. It crosses its arms and tries to just wait things out. It twiddles its thumbs. It fidgets and scratches and wriggles. It flails its arms, shakes its fists, and screams. It crouches and slumps among its old memories, its favorite old movies and songs, as random chattering. It bloats with pride at having been "watching the breath" so clearly. On and on and on.

The mind defines itself as "this" as opposed to "that". It agrees or disagrees. It tells itself stories about itself over and over to try to prove to itself that it is real. It takes a point of view and then confuses that viewpoint with what is seen and so blinds itself to seeing clearly. And on and on and on.

The mind is the mirror in which experiences arise and present themselves within Awareness.

Breathing in, breathing out, just sit.

### Review

Sit on a zafu or cushion facing a blank wall. If you use a timer or a clock, place it out of sight and forget about it until thirty minutes are up.

Straighten and align your posture: ears over the shoulders, nose over the navel. Release the shoulders. Knees should be flat on the mat or floor so that together with the buttocks a firm base of support is formed. Place the hands left over right in the lap with the inner edges of the hands against the belly. Rest the wrists and allow the thumbs to touch lightly.

Exhale and bow forward from the hips, keeping the back straight. Pause.

Inhale and straighten. Rest back from the hips lightly and exhale, placing the tongue against the hard palate. Keep the chin tucked in slightly. Eye gaze is soft, half-open, and directed downwards slightly.

Sit. Feel the movement of the breath together with the tanden (lower belly). Don't arrange the breath. Just breathe the breath.

When you become lost in thinking, sleeping, hearing, seeing, itching, or anything at all, just notice that and bring yourself back to present experience through feeling this breath.

Practice yourself as you are, right now.

## The Practice of Taking Care

By Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei (while training as Shuso)

Zazen-ji, 1991

“If we look at anything that we encounter throughout the day, we find a seamless web of inter-relationships and the more we cut through the seeming dualities, the more that we find this seamlessness. Work is then regarded as a way of recognizing this fact and taking responsibility for it. “Responsibility” means to make a response, an answer. We must answer the situation by doing what needs to be done.”

~ Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi, October 1986 “Active Recognition” from “Zen and a Bad Case of Birth and Death”.&nbsp;

Samu means “Caretaking practice”. That can sound like a noun, but the experience of samu, of practice in taking care, can only really be understood as a verb because samu is the exertion of practice. Samu is work done for the benefit of the Sangha, not one's personal benefit. So transcribing teisho or proofreading one of the Roshi's books is "samu". Cleaning your garage or doing yard work in your own home is something you do for your own benefit, so that is not "samu".&nbsp;

Samu tasks come out of the functioning of the monastery and include a vastly varied range of tasks: Cleaning, repairing, copying teisho, Dharma Talks and classes, transcription, publishing and distribution, sewing, studying and much, much more. In order to organize this array of activity, weekly formal samu meetings are scheduled at which the monks gather to discuss what needs to be done, by what time or date, and who can do it. But that is just one part of it.&nbsp;

Following the direction of the Roshi, samu meetings themselves serve as a medium of training for monks. And it is a rigorous training because the standard that is set for us is very high. What we are asked to do and are learning how to do is to approach what we do without a sense of problem. What that means, in practical terms, is that there is nowhere to go but to greater clarity in everything that we do.&nbsp;

This does not mean that tasks are carried out in a brittle, military-like fashion and there are not excuses for lapses. Far from it because that approach could only come out of a sense of

problem.&nbsp;

Someone forgets something. To vent a sense of problem, to vent anger or frustration, to take up any kind of attitude towards that person misses the point entirely. We are human and so we are going to make mistakes, forget things, confuse things, get lost in misunderstanding. If we do not allow ourselves to default to a sense of problem, what we are left with is a series of questions. What was it that was missed? How can we prevent that from happening? What was not clear? From this has grown criteria which is applied to samu tasks.&nbsp;

Misunderstandings, lapses, often occur in the isolation of one's thoughts about the task at hand. Rather than working as autonomous units, we have come to view the samu tasks not as the responsibility of any one individual, but as the expression of what actually is, dependent on every other thing for its existence. That allows us to go about them in such a way that they can be clarified and easily conveyed to others who also have varying capacities.&nbsp;

We have found that if we do not default to a sense of problem, then like and dislike have nothing to do with how things actually are. Agreeing and disagreeing with each other are just some of the ingredients that are present. We look them over, just as we do the samu tasks, and decide what is useful, what is not, in getting things done.&nbsp;

The majority of the monks practice an average of 40 hours per week, and some also have full-time jobs. Some work situations require a certain amount of travel and so sometimes the momentum slows. When that happens, the samu meetings become crucial.&nbsp;

Only by coordinating our activities, by stepping past our beliefs about who and what we are, what we can and cannot do, what we think 'fair' is or is not, can we simply do what needs to be done for the benefit of all? We can if we release the notion that we are some sort of centre point, that holding to that point is what defines us -- as what we do -- as important or unimportant. All it really entails is seeing what needs to be done and doing it as well, as accurately, as thoroughly as we possibly can.

Receiving the Dharma Seal

Hekiganroku Case 2: Zhaozhou's "The Vast Way is Without Difficulty"

Dharma Talk Presented by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

On this day, in this moment, I sit before the students gathered in the Hatto, having just received Inka, or the Seal of Authenticity as a Zen Teacher, from my Master, Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi in a

face-to-face and mind-to-mind private ceremony in the Hojo, or Abbot's Quarters. Having been a successor to his Dharma through shiho, I now have been entrusted as his Dharma-heir through inka and can Transmit it to my own students.

And so, the Lineage of Awakened Ancestors is continuously alive, being passed on from Teachers to students who themselves can become Teachers who then pass it on to their own students.

I can never repay the Roshi for his instruction, encouragement, his humour, and sometimes his fierceness in his insistence that I practise realization and follow through, that I make as much use as I can of rich resources that are available, the Dharma Gates that are open in all directions right now. In speaking with the Roshi, every situation, no matter what it is, is a lesson in how to embody the Way, in how to fulfill the Four Great Vows. Whether through instruction in formal practice, or providing guidance about how to respond to a student or a situation, or explaining something about literature or history or Linux, he is continuously pointing to the spaciousness and Radiance of Experiencing, continuously asking us to open past our states and beliefs so that we can see what he is pointing to. He is always Teaching, in word, deed and gesture. His commitment to all of his students, the depth and breadth of his knowledge and understanding of Dharma and the entanglements that students experience, his foresight in creating volumes of Teachings for those who will follow, all of the effort he has made to ensure that we have the best possible resources - for all that I have mentioned and so much more, I am grateful beyond words.

I am also very grateful to the late Ven. Shikai Zuiko osho-ajari whom we honoured as O-sensei. She was my Dharma-sister and together with me had received shiho as a successor in Anzan Hoshin roshi's Lineage. I am grateful for the instruction she gave me when I was a new student, and then for always being available to consult with over the years.

Our Transmission from such Masters as&nbsp; Eihei Dogen to Koun Ejo, to Tettsu Gikai, to Keizan Jokin, Sogaku Hakukaze, Anzan Daiko, Mushin Daie, from Joshu Dainen to Anzan Hoshin, and now from Anzan Hoshin to me, is the practice of Vast Openness that is without a centre or fringe, and has&nbsp; no beginning and no end.

The whole point of the Lineage is to protect, maintain and uphold, and to continue the practice of realization, so that it can be passed on to coming generations as completely as possible. It's not something that can be owned by anyone - although people will try to rope off areas of Zen practice and try to sell them off in various forms - those can only ever be scraps and husks because these fragments do not have actual Transmission behind them. But though the practice can't be owned by anyone, it can be upheld and passed on.

I often explain to students that since what we are practising is Vast Openness, within that some 'markers' are needed - a structure with clear signposts along the way so we don't just wander about aimlessly and fall into ditches and bumble in the brambles. In an open field you could just wander around and around&nbsp; in the closed circles of self concern. Without touchstone and

markers, we could very easily just “wander in delusion”.

And yet the structure that we use in our Zen practice is very simple. The forms are part of that structure: bowing practice, how we take our seats, how we handle our zafu, sitting zazen, walking kinhin, the kata, oryoki, koan practice, Mikkyo practices, samu, the structure of training itself, with the various training posts - minor and major - these are all markers within Vast Openness that show us clearly what we need to do now and what we need to do next.

But people tend to want to make them into things, into signposts that they can hold up and say “Look, I am here! I’ve arrived! I understand! I’ve GOT IT, for once and for all”. But they are not ‘things’ that you can take hold of and own. They are more like gates that open out into larger and larger spaces.

Some of you may be familiar with the game of "Weiqi" or in Japanese “Go”, which is likely the oldest board game. It originated in China and is thought to be about 4,000 years old. According to legend, the game was created by the legendary Chinese Emperor Yao as a tool to teach his son how to rule. Anzan roshi and I played many games together, especially decades ago when the Sangha was at our old monastery Zazen-ji. It is played on a flat board marked with a grid. The blank board is open with possibilities, but so many that it is not until the pieces - which are actually small stones - are placed on it that you can begin to see the shapes made by stones as clear possibilities. The stones do not just squat on a square but are set on the interstitial lines so that the four directions open out from them and can form relationships with the other stones. The stones are set and rest and interact rather than squat and then jump to take territory. There are more and more possibilities as more stones are added but this is not a matter of building actual structures out of the stones. The board and the stones together merely represent various possibilities of interaction. And if you narrow and focus attention on some little area, some strategy you’re letting yourself become preoccupied with, you’ll miss what’s going on with the rest of the board. In the games of Go that Anzan roshi played with me there was no winning or losing but only playing with possibilities until they became too certain to be interesting. Then the game was over.

In the same way, the forms, the practices we do are not about building structures and rules. They are about opening attention, not narrowing attention, and they all point to the Vastness in which all of this is occurring. But because self-image is so habitually contracted, so territorial, it will lock onto fragments of experiencing and try to hold them, freeze them, so that it can feel that it is finally clear, finally certain about something. This is what is going on when people take bits and pieces of our practice out of context and try to sell them off. Self-image wants to use meditation, spirituality, anything that is at hand in order to be better at being itself. It wants something isolated from everything around it, in order to "justify" itself, or make itself seem more "real". This is self-image practicing itself, and what it will produce is self-image. This is the exact opposite of our practice.

But, of course, the Teachers of our Lineage know all about this and there are many Teachings that address it, including many that became koan. So this evening I would like to raise with you one of

my favourite koan, Anzan Hoshin roshi and Joshu Dainen daiosho's translation of the Hekiganroku or Blue Cliff Records Case 2: Zhaozhou's "the Vast Way is Without Difficulty".

Yuanwu's Pointers:

Heaven and earth are flattened; the sun, moon, and stars go out. Even if blows from the stick fall like rain and "katsu" shouts roll like thunder, you still stop far short of the furthest truth. Even the Buddhas of the three worlds can only know it for themselves, and even the successive Lineage of Awakened Ancestors cannot exhaust its depths. The vast treasury of the sutras cannot wholly expound its meaning and even keen-eyed rag-robed monks cannot save themselves. At this point, what will you do? Saying the word Buddha trails mud and water. Saying the word "Zen," your face should redden with shame. The best students don't need to be told. As for late coming beginners, just get down to it and investigate it.

Through the process of narrowing and congealing into contraction, self-image flattens seeing, hearing, bodily sensation. It blocks out the world in order to sustain itself and the states that seem to justify it. Yuanwu says that "Even if blows from the stick fall like rain and "katsu" shouts roll like thunder, you will stop far short of the furthest truth. Unless you practise the instructions and follow through, it doesn't matter what anyone else tries to do to try to encourage you to open attention to experiencing as it actually is - not as you 'want' it to be. No one can 'give' you the Treasury of Dharma.

Yuanwu also says that "...even the successive Lineage of Awakened Ancestors cannot exhaust its depths". So this tells you that the Dharma is limitless, boundless, without end. So how could you take hold of any part of it and say "This is it", or think that you could possibly be 'finished' in your practice and study when even the successive Lineage of Awakened Ancestors stretching back 2600 years, stretching forward for as long as students are able to uphold the Dharma can never exhaust its depths?

And then Yuanwu says very plainly, "Saying the word "Zen," your face should redden with shame". The Buddha himself didn't want to Teach. He didn't want people to look to him as someone who "knew" everything. Self-image would love to find someone who 'knows everything' so that it can pick their brain and take their understanding and then itself be the 'one' who knows. Teaching students to practice isn't about any of that - quite the opposite in fact. So if you find yourself in online chat rooms straightening other people out about how they understand "Zen", or trying to 'share' your understanding of practice with your friends, you should just stop. One should never do anything that might later cause them embarrassment and you will be embarrassed by having done this if you deepen your practice. I almost made this mistake as a beginning student, but I was forewarned by the Roshi that this could come up so I avoided it. This is why all students are told that they should not discuss their practice with other people - to discuss it with a practice advisor, a Dharma Teacher or a Teacher.

The Koan:

Zhaozhou said to the assembly, "The Vast Way is without difficulty. Just don't accept or reject. With a single word, there may arise picking and choosing, or there may arise clarity. This old monk doesn't abide in such 'clarity.' Do you still hoard any treasures?"

The moment you think you have "clarity" should be the moment you choose to actively question what is being experienced. The same is true of a feeling of 'difficulty' - that should be a prompt to question what is being experienced. When Zhaozhou said "The Vast Way is without difficulty. Just don't accept or reject", he gives us no choice but to go into this questioning with the whole body.

Xuedou's Verse:

"The Vast Way is without difficulty."

The direct word directly said.

One with many,  
non-dual in two.

At the horizon, the sun rises,  
the moon sets beyond the hills.

High mountains,  
cold waters.

A dried skull has  
no consciousness, no joy.

The withered tree  
sings tirelessly in the wind.

Difficult, difficult!  
"Accepting and rejecting"?

"Clarity"?  
See for yourself.

Xuedou knows students so well. He says "The Vast Way is without difficulty, the direct word directly said. He's really giving you no choice. If what you are practising IS in fact the Vast Way, then you cannot justify a sense of difficulty. Self-image continuously generates a sense of difficulty

and this is what students spend so much time roiling about in - in their lives and even when they are sitting on the zafu. Xuedou won't let students do that. He points to the choice you need to make moment after moment when you are sitting - to release the sense of difficulty, by opening attention to what is actually being experienced in this moment.

Xuedou says, "One with many, non-dual in two". This is another way of saying "no opposites". Or "nothing in opposition". To use an example from your practice: When you are sitting and you open to the visual field, allowing the seeing to open to peripheral vision instead of peering at the wall, the wall isn't obstructing the seeing. The seeing of the wall is part of the seeing. When you allow attention to open to seeing and hearing and bodily sensation - as many sense fields as you are able - none of these obstruct each other - they all provide information about the whole of your experiencing. Seeing does not obstruct hearing (non-dual in two); opening to all of the sense fields allows attention to open more and more completely (one with many).

Xuedou says,

At the horizon, the sun rises,  
the moon sets beyond the hills.

High mountains,  
cold waters.

Both of these verses speak of things as they are. At the horizon, the sun rises. You don't do anything to make that happen. And how you are won't stop that from happening. There is space for you and everything else and still the sun rises at the horizon and the moon sets beyond the hills. When there are high mountains, there is cold water (water comes from glaciers atop mountains). When there is cold water, there are high mountains.

Stop struggling. Experiencing unfolds as it actually is. Open attention to this extraordinary play of experiencing and - as the Roshi would say - enjoy yourself. Thoughts come and go, feelings come and go, sensations shift and change. Birth, old age, fresh bread, stale crackers, bird song, the sunlight on your skin and the smell of new flowers in the spring. Each thing is in its own place; each thing is taking its own time. Stop struggling.

Xuedou then says,

A dried skull has  
no consciousness, no joy.

The withered tree  
sings tirelessly in the wind.

Again, he's speaking about things as they are. A dried skull has no consciousness, no joy. This is obvious on the most basic of levels. But also, if you are sitting there on your zafu, trying to be hollow, trying to be "no-one", trying to be any way at all, you are like the dried skull with no consciousness, and no joy.

Meanwhile the withered tree isn't trying to be a 'something'. It isn't trying to make a sound. And yet, because it is what it is, and because of the way it interacts with the wind, because both of these things are exerting themselves as they are, there is a song. If you have ever heard a withered tree singing in the wind, you'll know how beautiful that sound is.

Zhaozhou Congren zenji was speaking from what Eihei Dogen zenji called *Before Thinking* and Koun Ejo zenji called the *Treasury of Luminosity*, pointing past the ideas about confusion and clarity held by students.

As Anzan Hoshin roshi said in the series "Without Difficulty: Commentaries of Jianzhi Sengcan's Xinxin Ming: Words on Trusting Awareness",

Quote:

"In the absence of picking and choosing, there might arise clarity. But if it is a clarity that depends upon the absence of something then it is merely another state of mind. Like all states it will come and go, like mist and fog and rain and light and dark within the sky. To be truly without difficulty, we must not settle for merely the opposite of anything let alone try to hoard it as if it were a treasure. Instead we must sit, walk, stand, and lie down as the sky itself, always already before and beyond the conditions of body and mind that gather and disperse like weather. There is nowhere to abide, nowhere to dwell, nothing that can be grasped".

End Quote.

Ryoko Jikaze's Comments and Questions:

Old Zhaozhou confounds the monk. I think the monk confounds Zhaozhou as well, otherwise he would have just beaten the monk into Vimalakirti's silence, wouldn't he? Or is this some kind of dim-witted compassion, letting oneself get entangled in all of this talk of "picking and choosing," "clarity," and "difficulty, no difficulty"? Is there someone to be entangled? Perhaps that's the point after all. Still, there has to be a clearer way.

Ryoko Jikaze doesn't mean that Zhaozhou doesn't know how to respond to the monk. But when a

student asks a question, the Teacher is tasked with finding a way to respond in such a manner that the student will understand. That can be quite difficult, especially if the student has already taken up a firm stance. Ryoko Jikaze points out that Zhaozhou could have just “beaten the monk into Vimalakirti’s silence.” And although that would have let Zhaozhou off the hook, he chose to help the student understand instead. He’s being a bit tongue in cheek, a bit humorous when he says “Or&nbsp; is this some kind of dim-witted compassion, letting oneself get entangled in all of this talk of "picking and choosing", "clarity," and "difficulty, no difficulty"? Is there someone to be entangled? Perhaps that's the point after all. Still, there has to be a clearer way”. He’s asking students to look into what is being spoken of here, so that they too can understand what Zhaozhou is pointing to.

Zhaozhou said, "The Vast Way is without difficulty. Just don't accept or reject. With a single word, there may arise picking and choosing, or there may arise clarity. This old monk doesn't abide in such 'clarity.' Do you still hoard any treasures?"

For the Dharma to be Transmitted, it must be given and it must be received. There can be no "holding on" or hoarding. What can be held? This is the true meaning of what people call "renunciation". What can be held? What can you hold reality with? Where could you take a hold of it?

This old monk right here does not abide in such clarity and hoards no treasures. This is how this old monk has received the Dharma Seal of her Master, yet another old monk.

Please, keep your practice open and straight.

Recorded Teachings Curriculum  
by Ven. Mishin godo  
updated May 25th, 2012

The recorded teisho library offers students a vast treasury of instruction in the Dharma. The library contains many of the thousands of teisho, Dharma Talks and classes presented by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin, as well as Dharma Talks and mondo presented by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei, Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei and practice advisors. Listening to these recordings is part of developing an understanding of practice and familiarizing yourself with the Teachings of the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors.

Recorded Teachings Curriculum

With so much to choose from, students often wonder where to begin or what to listen to next. As a starting point, students can work through the associate student teisho curriculum or the general student teisho curriculum listed below. New students should begin with the series, "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice", and then follow the rest of the curriculum. Please make a copy of the teisho curriculum and keep it on your computer to keep track of the teisho series you have listened to.

How often should you listen to teisho?

If you are sitting once a week, listen to one teisho per month. If you are sitting several times a week, listen to one teisho a week. If you are sitting at least once a day every day, listen to two teisho a week. It is best to set a schedule for listening to teisho, rather than leaving it up to whether or not you "feel" like hearing a recording.

Thank you.

Gassho,  
Ven. Mishin godo  
Librarian, White Wind Zen Community Archives  
mishin at gmail dot com

#### Associate Student Teisho Curriculum

Before Thinking  
The Posture of Practice  
Sitting and Walking  
Thinking About Not Thinking  
The Tiny Book of Stopping and Looking  
The Meaning of Mindfulness  
The Point of the Posture and What It Points To  
The Touchstone  
Sitting Up Straight  
Monkey in the House of Six Windows  
Being Breathed  
Simple Minded  
Is There a Problem?  
Choice  
The Circle  
Dongshan's Hot and Cold  
Measureless  
Mind the Gap  
Freedom and Tyranny  
The Point of Wisdom: Minding Your Own Bodymind

Birth, Old Age, Sickness and Death  
Flowers and Worms  
Mula Paryiya Sutta  
Aligned with the Way  
The Activity of the Primordial Mirror  
Wild Horse of Mind  
The Four Noble Truths  
The Four Great Vows  
What Does it Take to Become Buddha?  
Responsibility  
The Eightfold Path  
The Unborn  
Eight Awarenesses  
This World of Ten Directions  
Zazen: The Practice of Realization  
Four Dhyanas  
Hekiganroku 14: Yunmen's "A Right Word"  
Mind Cannot be Grasped  
Realm of Appearances  
The Wheel of Becoming  
Traps and Cages Spring Open  
Zen Arts: The Flowering of the Senses  
Vain and Vanished  
Snake's Head Soup  
Stainless  
Expect to be Surprised  
Virya - Exertion  
The Bridge  
Dealing With the Demon  
Freefall  
Life and Death and All That  
Lineage  
Zen is Not Kidding  
The Forms of Attention  
Maintaining the Way  
Braising the Mind of the Way  
The Dragon in His Waters, the Tiger in Her Mountains  
Return to the Root

General Student Teisho Curriculum

Remembering Reality

Studying the Mystery  
Living With This Breath  
Immo: Suchness  
Shodoka by Yoka Daishi  
Development of Buddhist Psychology  
Bodymind of the Way  
Landscape of Reality  
Painting Reality  
Bodhidharma's Eyes  
Round and Bright  
Playing with Space  
Five Fingers, Ten Directions  
Turning the Wheel of the Way  
Bright Right Through  
Bowling and Receiving  
The Thread of the Buddhas  
Essentially Real  
Without Difficulty  
Wandering on Medicine Mountain

## Recorded Teachings Playback Schedule

### Schedule of Recorded Teachings Played at Sittings at Dainen-ji

If you have missed an associate or general sitting, please listen to the teisho that was played at that sitting as soon as possible, so that the continuity of what is being presented is not disrupted. You can download the MP3 files of recordings from the WWZC media site. When the teisho presented are part of a series, the teisho in that series should be listened to in the correct order and with none missed out.

Saturday, December 23rd to Saturday, December 30th

Saturday, December 23rd general sitting: "Without Difficulty": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on Jianzhi Sengcan's "Xinxin Ming: Words on Trusting Awareness"; reading of the text. (1 of 26, 11 minutes)

Sunday, December 24th formal sitting: SAKN Releasing by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin:

"Unobstructed" (2 of 5, 22 minutes)

Monday, December 25th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Confusion" (37 of 71, 9 minutes)

Thursday, December 28th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Confusion" (37 of 71, 9 minutes)

Saturday, December 30th general sitting: "Without Difficulty": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on Jianzhi Sengcan's "Xinxin Ming: Words on Trusting Awareness": "It Wasn't Sengcan" (2 of 26, 24 minutes)

Saturday, December 16th to Saturday, December 23rd

Saturday, December 16th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: "Yaoshan's 'You Don't Understand'" (22 of 22, 19 minutes)&nbsp;

Sunday, December 17th formal sitting: SAKN Releasing by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Lankavatara: A reading of the text" (1 of 5, 6 minutes)

Monday, December 18th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Pisspot of Life" (36 of 71, 5 minutes)

Thursday, December 21st associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Pisspot of Life" (36 of 71, 5 minutes)

Saturday, December 23rd general sitting: "Without Difficulty": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on Jianzhi Sengcan's "Xinxin Ming: Words on Trusting Awareness"; reading of the text. (1 of 26, 11 minutes)

Saturday, December 9th to Saturday, December 16th

Saturday, December 9th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: "Yaoshan's Shout" (21 of 22, 16 minutes)&nbsp;

Sunday, December 10th formal sitting: SAKN Five Spheres of SAKN: "Any Questions?" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin (7 of 7,&nbsp; 27 minutes)

Monday, December 11th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Mirroring" (35 of 71, 9 minutes)&nbsp;

Thursday, December 14th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Mirroring" (35 of 71, 9 minutes)

Saturday, December 16th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: "Yaoshan's 'You Don't Understand'" (22 of 22, 19 minutes)&nbsp;

Saturday, December 2nd to Saturday, December 9th

Saturday, December 2nd combined sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen



Saturday, November 25th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyan: "The Way of Clouds and Water" (20 of 22, 19 minutes)

Saturday, November 11th to Saturday, November 18th

Saturday, November 11th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyan: "Gao" (18 of 22, 22 minutes)

Monday, November 13th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "The Garden" (31 of 71, 7 minutes)

Thursday, November 16th, associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "The Garden" (31 of 71, 7 minutes)

Saturday, November 18th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyan: "Balls of Mud" (19 of 22, 21 minutes)

Recorded teisho to be played during November Sesshin

SAkN Root Cycle Four: Moving in Knowing - "Always Moving" (teisho 5 of 5, 2 minutes)

Saturday, November 4th to Saturday, November 11th

Saturday, November 4th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyan: "At Rest" (17 of 22, 22 minutes)

Sunday, November 5th formal sitting: SAkN Five Spheres of SAkN by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Practising Nothing" (4 of 7, &nbsp; 24 minutes)

Monday, November 6th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Motives" (30 of 71, 13 minutes)

Thursday, November 9th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Motives" (30 of 71, 13 minutes)

Saturday, November 11th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyan: "Gao" (18 of 22, 22minutes)

Saturday, October 28th to Saturday, &nbsp; November 4th

Saturday, October 28th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyan: "Oxen" (16 of 22, 19 minutes)

Sunday, October 29th formal sitting: SAkN: Five Spheres of SAkN by Zen Master Anzan hoshin:

"Content and Context: 1st and 2nd Spheres" (3 of 7, 22 minutes)

Monday, October 30th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "The Top of the Mountain" (29 of 71, 12 minutes)&nbsp;

Thursday, November 2nd associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "The Top of the Mountain" (29 of 71, 12 minutes)

Saturday, October 4th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: "At Rest" (17 of 22, 22 minutes)

Saturday, October 21st to Saturday,&nbsp; October 28th

Saturday, October 21st general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: "A Dog's Mouth" (teisho 15 of 22, 18 minutes)&nbsp;

Sunday, October 22nd formal sitting: SAKN: Five Spheres of SAKN by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Dongshan's Wu-Wei" (2 of 7, 21 minutes)

Monday, October 23rd associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "The Game" (28 of 71, 7 minutes)

Thursday, October 26th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "The Game" (28 of 71, 7 minutes)

Saturday, October 28th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: "Oxen" (16 of 22, 19 minutes)

Saturday, October 14th to Saturday. October 21st

Saturday, October 14th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: "Bodhidharma's Meaning" (teisho 14 of 22, 19 minutes)

Monday, October 16th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "The Gong" (27 of 71, 5 minutes)

Thursday, October 19th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "The Gong" (27 of 71, 5 minutes)

Saturday, October 21st general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: "A Dog's Mouth" (teisho 15 of 22, 18 minutes)&nbsp;

Saturday, October 7th to Saturday. October 14th

Saturday, October 7th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: "Magic" (teisho 13 of 22, 22 minutes)

Monday, October 9th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "What Makes Sense" (26 of 71, 9 minutes)

Thursday, October 12th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "What Makes Sense" (26 of 71, 9 minutes)

Saturday, October 14th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyen: "Bodhidharma's Meaning" (teisho 14 of 22, 19 minutes)

Saturday, September 30th to Saturday, October 7th

Saturday, September 30th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyen: "Yaoshan Solves a Problem" (teisho 12 of 22, 23 minutes)

Sunday, October 1st formal sitting: SAKN: Five Spheres of SAKN: "No Thing Stands Prior" (teisho 1 of 7, 36 minutes)&nbsp;

Saturday, October 7th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyen: "Bodhidharma's Meaning" (teisho 14 of 22, 19 minutes)

Recorded teisho playback during the Daruma-ki O-sesshin:

Monday, October 2nd - SAKN Root Cycle Three: Aware Space: "Surrender into Radiance" (teisho 7 of 8, 12 minutes)

Tuesday, October 3rd - SAKN Root Cycle Three: Aware Space: "The Spectrum of Radiance" (teisho 8 of 8, 14 minutes)

Wednesday, October 4th - SAKN Root Cycle Four: Moving in Knowing: "Motion" (teisho 1 of 5, 28 minutes)

Thursday, October 5th - SAKN Root Cycle Four: Moving in Knowing: "Unknown Knowing" (2 of 5, 32 minutes)

Friday, October 6th - SAKN Root Cycle Four: Moving in Knowing: "Finite and Infinite Motion: The Total Field of All Possibilities" (3 of 5, 31 minutes)

Saturday, October 7th - SAKN Root Cycle Four: Moving in Knowing: "Tantra is Unnecessary" (4 of 5, 20 minutes)

Saturday, September 16th, to Saturday, September 23rd.&nbsp;

Saturday, September 16th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyen: "The Highest Mountain, the Floor of the Deepest Ocean" (teisho 11 of 22, 22 minutes)

Sunday, September 17th formal sitting: "SAKN: Dimensions of Space by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Exploring Spaces" (8 of 8, 19 minutes)&nbsp;

Monday, September 18th associate sitting: “Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice” by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: “Understanding” (23 of 71, 13 minutes)

Thursday, September 21st associate sitting: “Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice” by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: “Understanding” (23 of 71, 13 minutes)

Saturday, September 9th, to Saturday, September 16th.&nbsp;

Saturday, September 9th general sitting: “Wandering on Medicine Mountain”: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: “Layman Pang's Good Start” (teisho 10 of 22, 23 minutes)

Sunday, September 10th formal sitting: SAKN: Dimensions of Space by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Outshining" (7 of 8, 13 minutes)

Monday, September 11th associate sitting: “Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice” by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: “Before Thinking” (22 of 71, 7 minutes)

Thursday, September 14th associate sitting: “Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice” by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: “Before Thinking” (22 of 71, 7 minutes)

Saturday, September 16th general sitting: “Wandering on Medicine Mountain”: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: “The Highest Mountain, the Floor of the Deepest Ocean” (teisho 11 of 22, 22 minutes)

Saturday, September 2nd, to Saturday, September 9th

Saturday, September 2nd general sitting: “Wandering on Medicine Mountain”: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: “Going Home” (teisho 9 of 22, 20 minutes)

Sunday, September 3rd formal sitting: SAKN: Dimensions of Space by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Space Is Not A Space" (6 of 8,&nbsp; 29 minutes)

Monday, September 4th associate sitting: “Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice” by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: “The Jewel of the Sky” (21 of 71, 7 minutes)

Thursday, September 7th associate sitting: “Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice” by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: “The Jewel of the Sky” (21 of 71, 7 minutes)

Saturday, September 9th general sitting: “Wandering on Medicine Mountain”: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: “Layman Pang's Good Start” (teisho 10 of 22, 23 minutes)

Saturday, August 19th to Saturday, August 26th, 2023

Saturday, August 19th general sitting: “Wandering on Medicine Mountain”: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: “Yaoshan Sits Down and Gets Up” (teisho 7 of 22, 26 minutes)

Sunday, August 20th formal sitting: "SAKN: Dimensions of Space by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi:

"Dimensions of Bodily Space" (3 of 8, 24 minutes)

Monday, August 21st associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Primordial Space" (19 of 71, 9 minutes)

Thursday, August 24th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Primordial Space" (19 of 71, 9 minutes)

Saturday, August 26th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: "Unthinkable" (teisho 8 of 22, 29 minutes)

Saturday, August 12th, 2023 to Saturday, August 19th, 2023

Saturday, August 12th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: "Yaoshan's Single Phrase" (teisho 6 of 22, 19 minutes)

Monday, August 14th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Using It Without Knowing It" (18 of 71, 8 minutes)

Thursday, August 17th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Using It Without Knowing It" (18 of 71, 8 minutes)

Saturday, August 19th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: "Yaoshan Sits Down and Gets Up" (teisho 7 of 22, 26 minutes)

Saturday, August 5th to Saturday, August 12th, 2023

Saturday, August 5th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: "The Source of Wisdom" (teisho 5 of 22, 23 minutes)

Sunday, August 6th formal sitting: SAKN: Dimensions of Space by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Dimensions of Bodily Space" (3 of 8, 24 minutes)

Monday, August 7th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Beginners Mind Workshop Part 2" (17 of 71, 13 minutes)

Thursday, August 10th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Beginners Mind Workshop Part 2" (17 of 71, 13 minutes)

Saturday, August 12th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: "Yaoshan's Single Phrase" (teisho 6 of 22, 19 minutes)

Recorded teisho schedule - Saturday, July 29th to Saturday, August 5th, 2023

Saturday, July 29th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: "Shit, Bowls, Lion, and a Knife" (teisho 4 of 22, 21 minutes)

Sunday, July

30th formal sitting: "SAkN: Dimensions of Space" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Speaking of Space" (teisho 2 of 8, 24 minutes)

Monday, July 31st associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Beginner's Mind Workshop Part 1" (16 of 71, 20 minutes)

Thursday, August 3rd associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Beginner's Mind Workshop Part 1" (16 of 71, 20 minutes)

Saturday, August 5th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: "The Source of Wisdom" (teisho 5 of 22, 23 minutes)

Saturday, Saturday, July 22nd to Saturday, July 29th, 2023

Saturday, July 22nd general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: "Try to Lift It" (teisho 3 of 22, 17 minutes)

Sunday, July 23rd formal sitting: SAkN: Dimensions of Space by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Opening the Space of Understanding" (1 of 8, 22 minutes)

Monday, July 24th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "The Arising of Spring" (15 of 71, 6 minutes)

Thursday, July 27th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "The Arising of Spring" (15 of 71, 6 minutes)

Saturday, July 29th "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: "Shit, Bowls, Lion, and a Knife" (teisho 4 of 22, 21 minutes)

Saturday, July 15th to Saturday, July 22nd, 2023

Saturday, July 15th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: "Planting Flowers on a Stone" (teisho 2 of 22, 23 minutes)

Sunday, July 16th formal sitting: SAkN: Infinite Infinities by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Bright Darkness" (7 of 7, 19 minutes)

Monday, July 17th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "The Rabbit-Killing Tree" (14 of 71, 18 minutes)

Thursday, July 20th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "The Rabbit-Killing Tree" (14 of 71, 18 minutes)

Saturday, July 22nd general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: "Try to Lift It" (teisho 3 of 22, 17 minutes)

Saturday, Saturday, July 8th to Saturday, July 15th, 2023

Saturday, July 8th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: "What About You?" (teisho 1 of 22, 22 minutes)

Saturday, July 8th Yaza: "Yaza 2012: Morning Star" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin.&nbsp;&nbsp; 

Monday, July 10th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Self-doubt and No-self" (11 of 71, 17 minutes)

Thursday, July 13th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Self-doubt and No-self" (11 of 71, 17 minutes)

Saturday, July 15th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: "Planting Flowers on a Stone" (teisho 2 of 22, 23 minutes)

Saturday, Saturday, July 1st to Saturday, July 8th, 2023

Saturday, July 1st general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowling and Acquiring the Essence": "Sacred Space" (13 of 13, 21 minutes)

Sunday, July 2nd formal sitting: SAKN: Infinite Infinities by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Practicing Infinite Infinities" (6 of 7, 25 minutes)&nbsp;

Monday, July 3rd associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Simplicity" (12 of 71, 3 minutes)&nbsp;

Thursday, July 6th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Simplicity" (12 of 71, 3 minutes)&nbsp;

Saturday, July 8th general sitting: "Wandering on Medicine Mountain": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Medicine Mountain": The Recorded Sayings and Doings of Zen Master Yaoshan Weiyuan: "What About You?" (teisho 1 of 22, 22 minutes)

Saturday, Saturday, June 24th to Saturday, July 1st, 2023

Monday, June 26th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Self-doubt and No-self" (11 of 71, 17 minutes)&nbsp;

Thursday, June 29th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Self-doubt and No-self" (11 of 71, 17 minutes)&nbsp;

Saturday, July 1st general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowling and Acquiring the Essence": "Sacred Space" (13 of 13, 21 minutes)

Saturday, Saturday, June 17th to Saturday, June 24th, 2023

Saturday, June 17th general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowling and Acquiring the Essence": "What Will Be Lost" (12 of 13, 29 minutes)&nbsp;

Sunday, June 18th formal sitting: SAKN: Infinite Infinities by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Points of Experience" (5 of 7, 18 minutes)

Monday, June 19th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Inside and Outside" (10 of 71, 14 minutes)&nbsp;

Thursday, June 22nd associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Inside and Outside" (10 of 71, 14 minutes)&nbsp;

Saturday, June 24th general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowing and Acquiring the Essence": "Sacred Space" (13 of 13, 21 minutes)

Saturday, Saturday, June 10th to Saturday, June 17th, 2023

Saturday, June 10th general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowing and Acquiring the Essence": "The Place the Three Jewels Shine" (11 of 13, 24 minutes)

Monday, June 12th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "The Great Matter" (9 of 71, 14 minutes)

Thursday, June 15th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "The Great Matter" (9 of 71, 14 minutes)

Saturday, June 17th general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowing and Acquiring the Essence": "What Will Be Lost" (12 of 13, 29 minutes)

Recorded teisho playback during the June Sesshin:

Saturday, June 10th: SAKN Root Cycle Three: Aware Space: "Open Details" (4 of 8, 13 minutes)&nbsp;

Saturday, Saturday, June 3rd to Saturday, June 10th, 2023

Saturday, June 3rd general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowing and Acquiring the Essence": "Authority and Customs" (10 of 13, 23 minutes)&nbsp;&nbsp;

Sunday, June 4th formal sitting: SAKN: Infinite Infinities by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Huntun's Faceless Face" (4 of 7, 23 minutes)

Monday, June 5th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Uncertainty" (8 of 71, 14 minutes)

Thursday, June 8th associate sitting: Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master

Anzan Hoshin: "Uncertainty" (8 of 71, 14 minutes)

Saturday, June 10th general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowing and Acquiring the Essence": "The Place the Three Jewels Shine" (11 of 13, 24 minutes)

Saturday, Saturday, May 27th to Saturday, June 3rd, 2023

Saturday, May 27th general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowing and Acquiring the Essence": "Socks and Rice Cakes" (9 of 13, 26 minutes)

Monday, May 29th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Beyond Convenience" (7 of 71, 11 minutes)

Thursday, June 1st associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Beyond Convenience" (7 of 71, 11 minutes)

Saturday, June 3rd general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowing and Acquiring the Essence": "Authority and Customs" (10 of 13, 23 minutes)

Saturday, Saturday, May 20th to Saturday, May 27th, 2022

Saturday, May 20th general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowing and Acquiring the Essence": "The Dragon Maiden" (8 of 13, 19 minutes)&nbsp;

Sunday, May 21st formal sitting: SAKN: Infinite Infinities by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "The Wonton" (3 of 7, 25 minutes)

Monday, May 22nd associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "The Single Bodymind" (6 of 71, 14 minutes)

Thursday, May 25th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "The Single Bodymind" (6 of 71, 14 minutes)

Saturday, May 27th general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowing and Acquiring the Essence": "Socks and Rice Cakes" (9 of 13, 26 minutes)&nbsp;

Recorded Teisho Playback During the Sogaku-ki O-sesshin

Saturday, May 13th: SAKN Root Cycle Two: Locating the Self: "Understanding, Misunderstanding" (1 of 3, 14 minutes)

Sunday, May 14th: SAKN Root Cycle Two: Locating the Self: "Locatedness and Framing" (2 of 3, 29 minutes)

Monday, May 15th: SAKN Root Cycle Two: Locating the Self: "The Energy of Framing" (3 of 3, 22

minutes )&nbsp;

Tuesday, May 16th: SAKN Root Cycle Three: Aware Space: "Entering Aware Space" (1 of 8, 15 minutes)

Wednesday, May 17th: SAKN Root Cycle Three: Aware Space: "Frames of Time and Space" (2 of 8, 21 minutes)

Thursday, May 18th: SAKN Root Cycle Three: Aware Space: " The Body of Knowing" (3 of 8, 14 minutes)

Saturday, Saturday, May 13th to Saturday, May 20th, 2022

Saturday, May 13th combined associate and general sitting "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Snow" (5 of 71, 13 minutes)

Saturday, May 20th general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowling and Acquiring the Essence": "The Dragon Maiden" (8 of 13, 19 minutes)

Recorded Teisho Playback During the Sogaku-ki O-sesshin

Saturday, May 13th: SAKN Root Cycle Two: Locating the Self: "Understanding, Misunderstanding" (1 of 3, 14 minutes)

Sunday, May 14th: SAKN Root Cycle Two: Locating the Self: "Locatedness and Framing" (2 of 3, 29 minutes)

Monday, May 15th: SAKN Root Cycle Two: Locating the Self: "The Energy of Framing" (3 of 3, 22 minutes )&nbsp;

Tuesday, May 16th: SAKN Root Cycle Three: Aware Space: "Entering Aware Space" (1 of 8, 15 minutes)

Wednesday, May 17th: SAKN Root Cycle Three: Aware Space: "Frames of Time and Space" (2 of 8, 21 minutes)

Thursday, May 18th: SAKN Root Cycle Three: Aware Space: " The Body of Knowing" (3 of 8, 14 minutes)

Saturday, Saturday, May 6th to Saturday, May 13th, 2022

Saturday, May 6th general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowling and Acquiring the Essence": "Miaoxin" (7 of 13, 17 minutes)&nbsp;

Sunday, May 7th formal sitting: SAKN: Infinite Infinities by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Infinite Points of Chaos" (2 of 7)

Monday, May 8th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "The Bodymind of Zazen" (4 of 71, 21 minutes)

Thursday, May 11th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "The Bodymind of Zazen" (4 of 71, 21 minutes)

Saturday, May 13th general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowling and Acquiring the Essence": "The Dragon Maiden" (8 of 13, 19 minutes)

Saturday, April 29th to Saturday, May 6th, 2022

Monday, May 1st associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Begin Here" (3 of 71)

Thursday, May 4th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Begin Here" (3 of 71)

Saturday, May 6th general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowling and Acquiring the Essence": "Miaoxin" (7 of 13)&nbsp;

Saturday, April 22nd to Saturday, April 29th

Saturday, April 22nd general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowling and Acquiring the Essence": "Moshan" (6 of 13)

Sunday, April 23rd formal sitting: SAKN: Infinite Infinities by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Unfolding, Enfolding" (1 of 7)

Monday, April 24th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Shamatha and Vipashyana" (2 of 71, 26 minutes)

Thursday, April 27th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Shamatha and Vipashyana" (2 of 71, 26 minutes)&nbsp;

Saturday, April 15th to Saturday, April 22nd

Saturday, April 15th general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowling and Acquiring the Essence": "Do Not Be Petty" (5 of 13)

Sunday, April 16th formal sitting: SAKN: "Tathagatagarbha" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Bodhicitta" (teisho 4 of 4)

Monday, April 17th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "What Are We Doing?" (Dharma Talk 1 of 71, 37 minutes)

Thursday, April 20th associate sitting: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen

Master Anzan Hoshin: "What Are We Doing?" (Dharma Talk 1 of 71, 37 minutes)  
Saturday, April 22nd general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's  
Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowing and Acquiring the Essence": "Moshan"  
(6 of 13)

Saturday, April 8th to Saturday, April 15th

Saturday, April 8th general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's  
Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowing and Acquiring the Essence": "Sincerity  
and the 'Worldly'" (4 of 13, 21 minutes)

Monday, April 10th associate sitting: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The  
Touchstone 22, Mahavairocana Part 2" (teisho 22 of 22, 13 minutes)

Thursday, April 13th associate sitting: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The  
Touchstone 22, Mahavairocana Part 2" (teisho 22 of 22, 13 minutes)

Saturday, April 15th general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's  
Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowing and Acquiring the Essence": "Do Not Be  
Petty" (5 of 13)

Saturday, April 1st to Saturday, April 8th

Saturday, April 1st general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's  
Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowing and Acquiring the Essence": "The Right  
Teacher" (3 of 13, 26 minutes)

Sunday, April 2nd formal sitting: SAKN: "Tathagatagarbha" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "The  
Flash of Knowing" (teisho 2 of 4)&nbsp;

Monday, April 3rd associate sitting: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The  
Touchstone 20, Mahavairocana part 1" (teisho 21 of 22, 12 minutes)&nbsp;&nbsp;

Thursday, April 6th associate sitting: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The  
Touchstone 20, Mahavairocana part 1" (teisho 21 of 22, 12 minutes)&nbsp; 

Saturday, April 8th general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's  
Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowing and Acquiring the Essence": "Sincerity  
and the 'Worldly'" (4 of 13, 21 minutes)

Saturday, March 25th to Saturday, April 1st

Monday, March 27th associate sitting: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The  
Touchstone 20, Fudo Myo-o Part 2" (teisho 20 of 22, 14 minutes)&nbsp;&nbsp;

Thursday, March 30th associate sitting: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The  
Touchstone 20, Fudo Myo-o Part 2" (teisho 20 of 22, 14 minutes)&nbsp; &nbsp;

Saturday, April 1st general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's  
Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowing and Acquiring the Essence": "The Right  
Teacher" (3 of 13)

Saturday, March 18th to Saturday, March 25th

Saturday, March 18th general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowling and Acquiring the Essence": "The Consequences of Realization" (teisho 1 of 12)

Sunday, March 19th formal sitting: "SAkN: Tathagatagarbha" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Does a Dog Have Buddha Nature?" (teisho 1 of 4)&nbsp;

Monday, March 20th associate sitting: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 19, Fudo Myo-o Part 1" (teisho 19 of 22, 12 minutes)&nbsp;&nbsp;

Thursday, March 23rd associate sitting: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 19, Fudo Myo-o Part 1" (teisho 19 of 22, 12 minutes)&nbsp;&nbsp;

Saturday, March 11th to Saturday, March 18th

Saturday, March 11th general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowling and Acquiring the Essence": "Reading of Dogen zenji's Raihai Tokuzui" (38 minutes)

Monday, March 13th associate sitting: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 18, Vastness" (Dharma talk 18 of 22, 15 minutes)

Thursday, March 16th associate sitting: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 18, Vastness" (Dharma talk 18 of 22, 15 minutes)&nbsp;

Saturday, March 18th general sitting: "Bowling and Receiving": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Raihai Tokuzui: Bowling and Acquiring the Essence": "The Consequences of Realization" (teisho 1 of 12, 23 minutes )

Saturday, March 4th to Saturday, March 11th

Saturday, March 4th general sitting: "The Landscape of Reality" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "The Last Piece" (12 of 12, 35 minutes)

Monday, March 6th associate sitting: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 17, Samantabhadra" (teisho 17 of 22, 18 minutes)

Thursday, March 9th associate sitting: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 17, Samantabhadra" (teisho 17 of 22, 18 minutes)

Saturday, March 11th combined sitting: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 18, Vastness" (teisho 18 of 22, 15 minutes)

Saturday, February 25th to Saturday, March 4th

Saturday, February 25th: "The Landscape of Reality" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Knowing Not-Knowing" (11 of 12, 35 minutes)

Sunday, February 26th: "SAkN: Presencing the Open Body" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi:

"Opening Past Everything" (teisho 5 of 5)

Monday, February 27th: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 16, Manjusri" (teisho 16 of 22, 18 minutes)

Thursday, March 2nd: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 16, Manjusri" (teisho 16 of 22, 18 minutes)

Saturday, March 4th: "The Landscape of Reality" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "The Last Piece" (12 of 12, 35 minutes)

Saturday, February 18th to Saturday, February 25th

Saturday, February 18th: "The Landscape of Reality" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Through the Edge" (10 of 12, 35 minutes)

Sunday, February 19th: SAKN: "Presenting the Open Body" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "The Fundamental Process of Self-image" (teisho 4 of 5)&nbsp;

Monday, February 20th: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 15, Ceaseless Activity" (teisho 15 of 22, 15 minutes)

Thursday, February 23rd: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 15, Ceaseless Activity" (teisho 15 of 22, 15 minutes)

Saturday, February 25th: "The Landscape of Reality" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Knowing Not-Knowing" (11 of 12, 35 minutes)

Saturday, February 11th to Saturday, February 18th

Saturday, February 11th: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 14, Karuna" (teisho 14 of 22, 22 minutes)&nbsp;

Saturday, February 18th: "The Landscape of Reality" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Through the Edge" (10 of 12, 35 minutes)

Recorded teisho timing during Nehan O-sesshin:

Saturday, February 11th: "Sitting Up Straight": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Keizan Jokin zenji's "Zazen Yojinki": "Straighter!" (17 of 18)

Sunday, February 12th: "Sitting Up Straight": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Keizan Jokin zenji's "Inexhaustible Field of Zazen" (18 of 18)

Monday, February 13th: SAKN "Root Cycle One" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Explanations" (teisho 1 of 6)

Tuesday, February 14th: SAKN "Root Cycle One" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Space" (teisho 2 of 6)

Wednesday, February 15th: SAKN "Root Cycle One" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Activity" (teisho 3 of 6)

Thursday, February 16th: SAKN "Root Cycle One" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Knowing" (teisho 4 of 6)

Saturday, February 4th to Saturday, February 11th

Saturday, February 4th: "The Landscape of Reality" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "The Kingdom of Nod" (9 of 12, 37 minutes)

Sunday, February 5th: "SAkN: Presencing the Open Body" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Objectifying Experience" (teisho 3 of 5)

Monday, February 6th: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 13, Living in the Space of Maitri" (teisho 13 of 22, 25 minutes)

Thursday, February 9th: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 13, Living in the Space of Maitri" (teisho 13 of 22, 25 minutes)

Saturday, February 11th: "The Landscape of Reality" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Through the Edge" (10 of 12, 35 minutes)

Saturday, January 28th to Saturday, February 4th

Saturday, January 28th: "The Landscape of Reality" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "A Little Tune" (8 of 12, 45 minutes)

Sunday, January 29th: "SAkN: Presencing the Open Body" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Where Is Your Face?" (teisho 2 of 5) &nbsp;

Monday, January 30th: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 12, The Practice of Taking Care" (Dharma talk 12 of 22, 22 minutes)

Thursday, February 2nd: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 12, The Practice of Taking Care" (Dharma talk 12 of 22, 22 minutes)

Saturday, February 4th: "The Landscape of Reality" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "The Kingdom of Nod" (9 of 12, 37 minutes)

Saturday, January 21st to Saturday, January 28th

Saturday, January 21st: "The Landscape of Reality" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Beneath Your Feet" (6 of 12, 28 minutes) &nbsp;

Sunday, January 22nd: SAKN: "Presencing the Open Body" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "The Paradox of Absence and Contraction" (teisho 1 of 5) &nbsp;

Monday, January 23rd: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 9, Entering the Space of Maitri" (teisho 11 of 22, 17 minutes)

Thursday, January 26th: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 9, Entering the Space of Maitri" (teisho 11 of 22, 17 minutes)

Saturday, January 28th: "The Landscape of Reality" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "The Incessant

Din of Dharma" (7 of 12, 28 minutes)

Saturday, January 14th to Saturday, January 21st

Saturday, January 14th: "The Landscape of Reality" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "What the Wind Wants" (5 of 12, 26 minutes)&nbsp;

Monday, January 16th: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 9, Serenity Is Not Special" (teisho 10 of 22, 18 minutes)

Thursday, January 19th: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 9, Serenity Is Not Special" (teisho 10 of 22, 18 minutes)

Saturday, January 21st: "The Landscape of Reality" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Beneath Your Feet" (6 of 12, 28 minutes)

Saturday, January 7th to Saturday, January 14th

Saturday, January 7th: "The Landscape of Reality" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "The Practice of Wonder" (4 of 12, 24 minutes)&nbsp;

Sunday, January 8th: SAKN: "Questioning the Enigma" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Dukkha is Bad Space" (teisho 4 of 4)

Monday, January 9th: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 8, Honestly" (teisho 9 of 22, 22 minutes)

Thursday, January 12th: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 8, Honestly" (teisho 9 of 22, 22 minutes)

Saturday, January 14th: "The Landscape of Reality" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "What the Wind Wants" (5 of 12, 26 minutes)&nbsp;

Saturday, December 31st to Saturday, January 7th&nbsp;

Saturday, December 31st: "The Landscape of Reality" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Flowers Fall" (3 of 12, 24 minutes)

Monday, January 2nd: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 8, The Nobility of Truth" (teisho 8 of 22, 21 minutes)

Thursday, January 5th: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 8, The Nobility of Truth" (teisho 8 of 22, 21 minutes)

Saturday, January 7th: "The Landscape of Reality" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "The Practice of Wonder" (4 of 12, 24 minutes)&nbsp;

Saturday, December 24th to Saturday, January 31st&nbsp;

Saturday, December 24th: "The Landscape of Reality" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Nehan" (2 of 12, 34 minutes)

Sunday, December 25th: SAKN: "Questioning the Enigma" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Dukkha

is Bad Space" (teisho 3 of 4)

Monday, December 26th: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 7, Faster Than the Speed of Thoughts" (teisho 7 of 22, 24 minutes)

Thursday, December 29th: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 7, Faster Than the Speed of Thoughts" (teisho 7 of 22, 24 minutes)

Saturday, December 31st: "The Landscape of Reality" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Flowers Fall" (3 of 12, 24 minutes)

Saturday, December 17th to Saturday, December 24th

Saturday, December 17th: "The Landscape of Reality" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Here We Are" (1 of 12, 34 minutes)

Sunday, December 18th: SAKN: "Questioning the Enigma" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "To Be and Not To Be" (teisho 2 of 4)

Monday, December 19th: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 6, Not a Tourist" (teisho 6 of 22, 24 minutes)

Thursday, December 22nd: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 6, Not a Tourist" (teisho 6 of 22, 24 minutes)

Saturday, December 24th: "The Landscape of Reality" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Nehan" (2 of 12, 34 minutes)

Saturday, December 10th to Saturday, December 17th

Saturday, December 10th: "Paramita" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Prajna" (7 of 7, 33 minutes)&nbsp;

Sunday, December 11th: SAKN: "Questioning the Enigma" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "The Flow of Reality" (teisho 1 of 4)

Monday, December 12th: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 5, Washing Rice With Water" (teisho 5 of 22, 22 minutes)

Thursday, December 15th: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 5, Washing Rice With Water" (teisho 5 of 22, 22 minutes)

Saturday, December 17th: "The Landscape of Reality" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Here We Are" (1 of 12, 34 minutes)

Saturday, December 3rd to Saturday, December 10th

Saturday, December 3rd: "Paramita" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Dhyana: Zazen Makes Fools of Us All" (6 of 7, 25 minutes)&nbsp;

Thursday, December 8th: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 4, The Three Natures" (4 of 22, 16 minutes)

Saturday, December 10th: "Paramita" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Prajna" (7 of 7, 33 minutes)&nbsp;

Saturday, November 26th to Saturday, December 3rd

Saturday, November 26th: "Paramita" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Virya: Exertion" (5 of 7, 18 minutes)&nbsp;

Sunday, November 27th: SAKN "The Anatomy of Awakening" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Feeling into Knowing: Sagara Mudra Samadhi" (teisho 9 of 9)

Monday, November 28th: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 3, Sticks and Feathers" (teisho 3 of 22, 22 minutes)&nbsp;

Saturday, December 3rd: "Paramita" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Dhyana: Zazen Makes Fools of Us All" (6 of 7, 25 minutes)

Saturday, November 19th to Saturday, November 26th

Saturday, November 19th: "Paramita" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Ksanti: Flexibility" (4 of 7, 22 minutes)&nbsp;

Sunday, November 20th: SAKN "The Anatomy of Awakening" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Strategies of Transcendence" (teisho 8 of )&nbsp;

Monday, November 21st: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 2, Countless" (Dharma Talk 2 of 22, 20 minutes)

Thursday, November 24th: "The Touchstone" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei: "The Touchstone 2, Countless" (Dharma Talk 2 of 22, 20 minutes)

Saturday, November 26th: "Paramita" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Virya: Exertion" (5 of 7, 18 minutes)

Saturday, November 12th to Saturday, November 19th

Saturday, November 12th: "Paramita" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Sila: Discipline" (3 of 7, 32 minutes)&nbsp;

Monday, November 14th: "Mula Paryiya Sutta" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi&nbsp;(22 minutes)

Thursday, November 17th: "Mula Paryiya Sutta" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi (22 minutes)

Saturday, November 19th: "Paramita" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Ksanti: Flexibility" (4 of 7, 22 minutes)&nbsp;

Saturday, November 5th to Saturday, November 12th

Saturday, November 5th: "Paramita" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Dana: Richness" (2 of 7, 36 minutes)&nbsp;

Monday, November 7th: "Horizons of Experience" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi (29 minutes)

Thursday, November 10th: "Horizons of Experience" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi (29 minutes)&nbsp;

Saturday, November 12th: "Paramita" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Sila: Discipline" (3 of 7, 32

minutes)&nbsp;nbsp;

Saturday, October 22nd to Saturday, October 29th

Saturday, October 29th: "Paramita" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Shujo No Shu: The Practice of Realization" ( 1 of 7, 28 minutes)&nbsp;nbsp;

Sunday, October 30th: SAKN: "The Anatomy of Awakening" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Mudra" (teisho 7 of 9)&nbsp;nbsp;

Monday, October 31st: "Surpassing the Teacher" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi (26 minutes)

Thursday, November 3rd: "Surpassing the Teacher" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi (26 minutes)

Saturday, November 5th: "Paramita" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Dana: Richness" (2 of 7, 36 minutes)&nbsp;nbsp;

Saturday, October 22nd to Saturday, October 29th

Saturday, October 22nd: "Wild Time: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Uji: Being Time" by Eihei Dogen zenji: "Going Forth" (teisho 11 of 11, 40 minutes)

Sunday, October 23rd: SAKN: "The Anatomy of Awakening" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "The Matter of Consciousness" (teisho 6 of 9)

Monday, October 24th: "River of Memory" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi (17 minutes)&nbsp;nbsp;

Thursday, October 27th: "River of Memory" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi (17 minutes)

Saturday, October 29th: "Paramita" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Shujo No Shu: The Practice of Realization" ( 1 of 7, 28 minutes)&nbsp;nbsp;

Saturday, October 15th to Saturday, October 22nd

Saturday, October 15th: "Wild Time: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Uji: Being Time" by Eihei Dogen zenji: "Stonehead and Sore Knees" (teisho 10 of 11, 29 minutes)

Sunday, October 16th: SAKN: "The Anatomy of Awakening" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "The Matter of Consciousness" (teisho 6 of 9)

Monday, October 17th: "What Does It Take to Become Buddha?" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei (16 minutes)

Thursday, October 20th: "What Does It Take to Become Buddha?" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei (16 minutes)

Saturday, October 22nd: "Wild Time: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Uji: Being Time" by Eihei Dogen zenji: "Going Forth" (teisho 11 of 11, 40 minutes)

Saturday, October 8th to Saturday, October 15th

Saturday, October 8th: "Wild Time: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Uji: Being Time" by Eihei Dogen zenji: "There's No Mistaking It" (9 of 13, 28 minutes)

Sunday, October 9th: SAKN: "The Anatomy of Awakening" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Tasting,

Smelling and Seeing Light" (5 of 9)

Monday, October 10th: Hekiganroku 52: "Stone Bridge" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi (17 minutes)&nbsp;&nbsp; 

Thursday, October 13th: "Virya: Exertion" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei (19 minutes)

Saturday, October 15th: "Wild Time: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Uji: Being Time" by Eihei Dogen zenji: "Stonehead and Sore Knees" (teisho 10 of 11, 29 minutes)

Saturday, October 1st to Saturday, October 8th

Saturday, October 1st: "Wild Time: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Uji: Being Time" by Eihei Dogen zenji: "Arising Attains Itself" (8 of 13, 33 minutes)

Sunday, October 2nd: SAKN: "The Anatomy of Awakening" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Hearing and Speaking" (4 of 9)&nbsp;&nbsp; 

Monday, October 3rd: Hekiganroku 40: Flower in a Dream: "Xuedou's Verse" Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi (2 of 3, 16 minutes)&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp; 

Thursday, October 6th: "Transparent" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei (34 minutes)

Saturday, October 8th: "Wild Time: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Uji: Being Time" by Eihei Dogen zenji: "There's No Mistaking It" (9 of 13, 28 minutes)

Saturday, September 24th to Saturday, October 1st

Saturday, September 24th: "Wild Time: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Uji: Being Time" by Eihei Dogen zenji: "Shining Forth" (7 of 13, 29 minutes)

Sunday, September 25th: SAKN: "The Anatomy of Awakening" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Hearing and Speaking" (4 of 9)&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp; 

Monday, September 26th: Hekiganroku 40: Flower in a Dream: "The Case" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi (2 of 3, 15 minutes)&nbsp;&nbsp; 

Thursday, September&nbsp;  29th: "The Sky Around the Clouds: Heaps and Poisons" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei (2 of 2, 11 minutes)

Saturday, October 1st: "Wild Time: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Uji: Being Time" by Eihei Dogen zenji: "Arising Attains Itself" (8 of 13, 33 minutes)

Saturday, September 17th to Saturday, September 24th

Saturday, September 17th: "Wild Time: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Uji: Being Time" by Eihei Dogen zenji: "Drunk and Walled In" (6 of 13, 35 minutes)

Sunday, September 18th: SAKN: "The Anatomy of Awakening" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Knowing as Feeling" (3 of 9)&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp; 

Monday, September 19th: Hekiganroku 40: Flower in a Dream: "Yuanwu's Pointing Phrases" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi (1 of 3, 14 minutes)&nbsp;&nbsp; 

Thursday, September&nbsp;  22nd: "The Sky Around the Clouds: The Sky Sits Up Straight" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei (1 of 2, 9 minutes)

Saturday, September 24th: "Wild Time: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Uji: Being Time" by Eihei Dogen zenji: "Shining Forth" (7 of 13, 29 minutes)

Saturday, September 10th to Saturday, September 17th

Saturday, September 10th: "Wild Time: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Uji: Being Time" by Eihei Dogen zenji: "Wild" (5 of 13)

Monday, September 12th: Hekiganroku 31: "Magu's Ring Staff" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi&nbsp;

Thursday, September 15th: "The Point of the Posture and What It Points To" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei&nbsp;

Saturday, September 17th: "Wild Time: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Uji: Being Time" by Eihei Dogen zenji: "Drunk and Walled In" (6 of 13)

Saturday, September 3rd to Saturday, September 10th

Saturday, September 3rd: "Wild Time: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Uji: Being Time" by Eihei Dogen zenji: "The Absolute Moment" (4 of 13)

Sunday, September 4th: SAKN "The Anatomy of Awakening" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Living the Body" (2 of 9)

Monday, September 5th: Hekiganroku 25: "Rengeho's Staff" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi&nbsp;

Thursday, September 8th: "The Meaning of Mindfulness" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei&nbsp;

Saturday, September 10th: "Wild Time: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Uji: Being Time" by Eihei Dogen zenji: "Wild" (5 of 13)

Saturday, August 27th to Saturday, September 3rd

Saturday, August 27th: "Wild Time: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Uji: Being Time" by Eihei Dogen zenji: "The Totality of Time" (3 of 13)

Monday, August 29th: Hekiganroku 14: "Yunmen's 'A Right Word'" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi&nbsp;

Thursday, September 1st: "The Mayko of Me" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei&nbsp;

Saturday, September 3rd: "Wild Time: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Uji: Being Time" by Eihei Dogen zenji: "The Absolute Moment" (4 of 13)

Saturday, August 20th to Saturday, August 27th

Saturday, August 20th: Wild Time: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Uji: Being Time" by Eihei Dogen zenji: "Now and Then" (2 of 13)

Monday, August 22nd: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Coming to Someone's Door" (Dharma Talk 103)

Thursday, August 25th: "The Forms of Attention" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, August 27th: "Wild Time: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Uji: Being Time" by Eihei Dogen zenji: "Totality of Time" (3 of 13)

Saturday, August 13th to Saturday, August 20th

Saturday, August 13th: "Wild Time: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Uji: Being Time" by Eihei Dogen zenji: Reading of "Uji: Being Time" (1 of 13)&nbsp;

Monday, August 15th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Entering a Village to Beg for Alms" (Dharma Talk 102)&nbsp;

Thursday, August 18th: "The Dragon in His Waters, the Tiger in Her Mountains, part 3" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei (3 of 3)&nbsp;

Saturday, August 20th: "Wild Time: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Uji: Being Time" by Eihei Dogen zenji: "Now and Then" (2 of 13)

Saturday, August 6th to Saturday, August 13th

Saturday, August 6th: "Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": "Arising and Disappearing" (17 of 17)

Sunday, August 7th: SAKN "Root Cycle Five" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Just This" (teisho 5 of 5)

Monday, August 8th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing People in a Forest" (Dharma Talk 101)&nbsp;

Thursday, August 11th: "The Dragon in His Waters, the Tiger in Her Mountains, part 2" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei (2 of 3)&nbsp;

Saturday, August 13th: "Wild Time: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentaries on "Uji: Being Time" by Eihei Dogen zenji: Reading of "Uji: Being Time" (1 of 13)&nbsp;

JULY 30TH - AUGUST 6TH, 2022

Saturday, July 30th: "Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": "The Embrace of Emptiness is the Ten Directions" (16 of 17)

Sunday, July 31st: SAKN "Root Cycle Five" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Unborn" (teisho 4 of 5)

Monday, August 1st: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing a Capital" (Dharma Talk 100)&nbsp;

Thursday, August 4th: "The Dragon in His Waters, the Tiger in Her Mountains, part 1" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei (1 of 3)

Saturday, August 6th: "Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": "Arising and Disappearing" (17 of 17)

JULY 23RD - 30TH, 2022

Saturday, July 23rd: "Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei

Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": "Evening Practice Comments: Absolute Effort" (15 of 17)

Sunday, July 24th: SAKN "Root Cycle Five" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "The Collapse of SAKN" (teisho 3 of 5)

Monday, July 25th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing a Castle" (Dharma Talk 99)

Thursday, July 28th: "The Contraptions of Contraction" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, July 30th: "Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": "The Embrace of Emptiness is the Ten Directions" (16 of 17)

JULY 9TH - 23RD, 2022

Saturday, July 16th: "Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": "The True Human Body" (14 of 17)

Sunday, July 17th: SAKN "Root Cycle Five" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Beyond the Fields" (teisho 2 of 5) &nbsp;

Monday, July 18th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing a High Minister" (Dharma Talk 98)

Thursday, July 21st: "The Circle" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, July 23rd: "Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": "Evening Practice Comments: Absolute Effort" (15 of 17)

JULY 9TH - 16TH, 2022

Saturday, July 9th: "Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": "Evening Practice Comments: Cutting Open" (13 of 17) &nbsp;

Monday, July 11th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing the Elderly" (Dharma Talk 97)

Thursday, July 14th: "The Art of Subtraction" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, July 16th: "Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": "The True Human Body" (14 of 17)

JULY 2ND - 9TH, 2022

Saturday, July 2nd: "Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": "Bodaishin, Hempen, Koboshin, Neijoshin" (12 of 17)

Sunday, July 3rd: SAKN "Root Cycle Five" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "The End of All Knowledge" (teisho 1 of 5) &nbsp;

Monday, July 4th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing a Prince" (Dharma Talk 96)

Thursday, July 7th: "Tada" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, July 9th: "Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei



Debate" (Dharma Talk 92)

Thursday, June 9th: "Splat" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei&nbsp;

Saturday, June 11th: "Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": "Raw Practice " (8 of 17)

MAY 21ST - JUNE 4TH, 2022

Saturday, May 28th: Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": "Mountains, Rivers, and Earth: the Geography of Bodymind" (7 of 17)

Monday, May 30th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing People Unarmed" (Dharma Talk 91)

Thursday, June 2nd: "Slip" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, June 4th: " Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": "Is a House a Home?" (7 of 17)

MAY 21ST - 28TH, 2022

Saturday, May 21st: Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": "Evening Comments: Practice, Pain, and Posture" (6 of 17)

Sunday, May 22nd: SAKN "Root Cycle Four" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Introduction to Finite and Infinite Motion" (teisho 3 of 5)

Monday, May 23rd: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing Armoured People" (Dharma Talk 90)

Thursday, May 26th: "Simple Minded" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, May 28th: Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": "Mountains, Rivers, and Earth: the Geography of Bodymind" (7 of 17)

MAY 14TH - 21ST, 2022

Saturday, May 14th: Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": "The Awakened Ancestors" (5 of 17)

Monday, May 16th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing People Who Are Disciplined" (Dharma Talk 89)

Thursday, May 19th: "Return to the Root" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, May 21st: Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": "Evening Comments: Practice, Pain and Posture" (6 of 17)

MAY 7TH - 14TH, 2022

Saturday, May 7th: Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei

Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": "Understanding, Not Understanding, Misunderstanding" (4 of 17)  
Sunday, May 8th: SAKN "Root Cycle Four" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Unknown Knowing"  
(teisho 2 of 5)  
Monday, May 9th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing Ascetics"  
(Dharma Talk 88)  
Thursday, May 12th: "Remembering Reality" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
Saturday, May 14th: Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei  
Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": " The Awakened Ancestors" (5 of 17)

APRIL 30TH - MAY 7TH, 2022

Saturday, April 30th: Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei  
Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": "Studying Through the Mind" (3 of 17)  
Monday, May 2nd: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing Aristocrats"  
(Dharma Talk 87)  
Thursday, May 5th: "Measureless" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
Saturday, May 7th: Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei  
Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": "Understanding, Not Understanding, Misunderstanding" (4 of 17)

APRIL 23RD - 30TH, 2022

Saturday, April 23rd: Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei  
Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": "Practice and realization; Nanyue and the 6th Ancestor: What is  
This Thing That Comes Thus?" (2 of 17)  
Sunday, April 24th: SAKN "Root Cycle Four" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Motion" (teisho 1 of 5)  
Monday, April 25th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing Mendicants"  
(Dharma Talk 86)  
Thursday, April 28th: "Just a Moment" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
Saturday, April 30th: Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei  
Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": " Studying Through the Mind" (3 of 17)

APRIL 16TH - 23RD, 2022

Saturday, April 16th: Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei  
Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": "Opening It Up (and reading of the text: "Shinjin Gakudo: Studying  
the Way Through the Bodymind" (1 of 17)  
Monday, April 18th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing People  
Without Gratitude" (Dharma Talk 85)  
Thursday, April 21st: "Expect to be Surprised" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
Saturday, April 23rd: Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei  
Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": "Practice and realization; Nanyue and the 6th Ancestor: What is  
This Thing That Comes Thus?" (2 of 17)

## APRIL 9TH - 16TH, 2022

Saturday, April 9th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "The Message and Legacy" (28 of 28)

Monday, April 11th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing People Who Are Grateful" (Dharma Talk 84)

Thursday, April 14th: "Here Is Not A Direction" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, April 16th: Bodymind of the Way: Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Shinjin Gakudo": "Opening It Up (and reading of the text: "Shinjin Gakudo: Studying the Way Through the Bodymind" (1 of 17)

## APRIL 2ND - 9TH, 2022

Saturday, April 2nd: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Hit the Mark" (27 of 28)

Monday, April 4th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing People Who Appear to be Attractive and Seeing People Who Appear to be Unattractive" (Dharma Talk 83)

Thursday, April 7th: "Opening Traps and Cages, part 3" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, April 9th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "The Message and Legacy" (27 of 28)

## MARCH 26TH - APRIL 2ND, 2022

Saturday, March 26th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Stories of Stones and Stars" (26 of 28)

Monday, March 28th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing People in Good Health" (Dharma Talk 82)

Thursday, March 31st: "Opening Traps and Cages, part 2" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, April 2nd: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Hit the Mark" (27 of 28)

## MARCH 19TH - 26TH, 2022

Saturday, March 19th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Fire" (25 of 28)

Sunday, March 20th: SAKN "Root Cycle Three" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "The Spectrum of Radiance" (teisho 8 of 8)

Monday, March 21st: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing People Who Suffer" (Dharma Talk 81)

Thursday, March 24th: "Opening Traps and Cages" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, March 26th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Stories of Stones and Stars" (26 of 28)

#### MARCH 12TH - 19TH, 2022

Saturday, March 12th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Hot and Cold Running Water" (24 of 28)

Monday, March 13th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing People Who Are Happy" (Dharma Talk 80)

Thursday, March 17th: "The Contraptions of Contraction" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, March 19th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Fire" (25 of 28)<sup>1</sup>

#### MARCH 5TH - 12TH, 2022

Saturday, March 5th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "No Worldly Things" (23 of 28)

Monday, March 7th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing Those Without Obsession" (Dharma Talk 79)

Thursday, March 10th: "The Makyo of Me" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, March 12th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Hot and Cold Running Water" (24 of 28)

#### FEBRUARY 26TH - MARCH 5TH, 2022

Saturday, February 26th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "What Is The Same For Each of Us" (22 of 28)

Sunday, February 27th: SAKN "Root Cycle Three" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Surrender into Radiance" (teisho 7 of 8)

Monday, February 28th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing People Obsessed With Pleasure" (Dharma Talk 78)

Thursday, March 3rd: "Splat" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, March 5th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "No Wordly Things" (23 of 28)

#### FEBRUARY 19TH - 26TH, 2022

Saturday, February 19th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on

Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "One Thing One Wisdom" (21 of 28)  
Sunday, February 20th: SAKN "Root Cycle Three" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Expanse" (6 of 8)  
Monday, February 21st: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing the Unadorned" (Dharma Talk 77)

Thursday, February 24th: "Freefall" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, February 26th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "What Is The Same For Each of Us" (22 of 28)

#### FEBRUARY 12TH - 19TH, 2022

Saturday, February 12th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "The Precepts and the Endowment" (20 of 28)

Monday, February 14th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing People Wearing Adornments" (Dharma Talk 76)

Thursday, February 17th: "Transparent" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, February 19th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "One Thing One Wisdom" (21 of 28)

#### FEBRUARY 4TH - 12TH, 2022

Saturday, February 5th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "No Ghosts" (19 of 28)

Monday, February 7th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing a Park" (Dharma Talk 75)

Thursday, February 10th: "Standing Clear" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, February 12th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "The Precepts and the Endowment" (20 of 28)

#### JANUARY 29TH - FEBRUARY 4TH, 2022

Saturday, January 29th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "The Problem With Dogen and Dogen's Problem" (18 of 28)

Sunday, January 30th: SAKN "Root Cycle Three" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "The Presumption of Separateness" (teisho 5 of 8)

Monday, January 31st: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing a Forest of Sorrowless Trees" (Dharma Talk 74)

Thursday, February 2nd: "Not Fade Away" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, February 4th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on

Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "No Ghosts" (19 of 28)

JANUARY 22ND - 29TH, 2022

Saturday, January 22nd: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Traces of the Transmission" (17 of 28)

Sunday, January 23rd: SAKN "Root Cycle Three" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Open Details" (teisho 4 of 8)

Monday, January 24th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing a Garden" (Dharma Talk 72)

Thursday, January 27th: "Virya: Exertion" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, January 29th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "The Problem With Dogen and Dogen's Problem" (18 of 28)

JANUARY 15TH - 22ND, 2022

Saturday, January 15th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Endless and Beginningless Practice and Realization" (16 of 28)

Sunday, January 16th: SAKN "Root Cycle Three" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Frames of Time and Space" (teisho 2 of 8)

Monday, January 17th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing Flowing Water" (Dharma Talk 71)

Thursday, January 20th: "The Forms of Attention" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, January 22nd: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Traces of the Transmission" (17 of 28)

JANUARY 8TH - 15TH, 2022

Saturday, January 8th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Easy and Joyful Dharma Gate" (15 of 28)

Monday, January 10th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing a Bridge" (Dharma Talk 70)

Thursday, January 13th: "Transparent" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, January 15th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Endless and Beginningless Practice and Realization" (16 of 28)

## JANUARY 1ST - 8TH, 2022

Saturday, January 1st: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "The Rabbit's Foot and the Shobo" (14 of 28)

Sunday, January 2nd: SAKN "Root Cycle Three" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Entering Aware Space" (teisho 1 of 8)

Monday, January 3rd: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing a Spring" (Dharma Talk 69)

Thursday, January 6th: "Tada" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, January 8th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Easy and Joyful Dharma Gate" (15 of 28)

## DECEMBER 25TH - JANUARY 1ST, 2021

Saturday, December 25th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Struck By It" (13 of 28)

Sunday, December 26th: SAKN "Root Cycle Two" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin: "Locatedness and Framing" (teisho 2 of 3)

Monday, December 27th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing a Well" (Dharma Talk 69)

Thursday, December 30th: "So Intimate it Cannot be Personal, part 3: The Person of Zazen" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, January 1st: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "The Rabbit's Foot and the Shobo" (14 of 28)

## DECEMBER 18TH - 25TH, 2021

Saturday, December 18th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Taking the Cure (12 of 28)

Sunday, December 19th: SAKN "Root Cycle Two" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin: "Locatedness and Framing" (teisho 2 of 3)

Monday, December 20th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing a Pond" (Dharma Talk 68)

Thursday, December 23rd: "So Intimate It Cannot be Personal: Dharma Talk 2: This Time It's Personal" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, December 25th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Struck By It" (13 of 28)

## DECEMBER 11TH - 18TH, 2021

Saturday, December 11th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "The Person and World of Zazen, part 2" (11 of 28)

Sunday, December 12th: SAKN "Root Cycle Two" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin: "Locatedness and Framing" (teisho 2 of 3)

Monday, December 13th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing a Reservoir" (Dharma Talk 67)

Thursday, December 16th: "So Intimate It Cannot be Personal" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei&nbsp;

Saturday, December 18th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Taking the Cure (12 of 28)

#### DECEMBER 4TH - 11TH, 2021

Saturday, December 4th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "The Person and World of Zazen, part 1" (10 of 28)

Monday, December 6th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing a Vast River" (Dharma Talk 66)

Thursday, December 9th: "Content and Context: Beyond the Circles of Self Concern" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei&nbsp;&nbsp;

Saturday, December 11th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "The Person and World of Zazen, part 2" (11 of 28)

#### NOVEMBER 27TH - DECEMBER 4TH, 2021

Saturday, November 27th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "The Buddha's Mudra" (9 of 28)

Sunday, November 28th: SAKN "Root Cycle Two: Locating the Self" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Understanding, Misunderstanding" (teisho 1 of 3)

Monday, November 29th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing Fruits" (Dharma Talk 65)

Thursday, December 2nd: " All Around, All at Once, part three: Unfabricated" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei&nbsp;&nbsp;

Saturday, December 4th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "The Person and World of Zazen, part 1" (10 of 28)

#### NOVEMBER 20TH - 27TH, 2021



of 6)

Monday, November 1st: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing Thorn Trees" (Dharma Talk 61)

Thursday, November 4th: "The Meaning of Mindfulness" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, November 6th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Simple Wonder" (5 of 28)

#### OCTOBER 23RD - 30TH, 2021

Saturday, October 23rd: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Reading of Bendowa, conclusion" (4 of 28)

Monday, October 25th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing High Mountains" (Dharma Talk 60)

Thursday, October 28th: "The Point of the Posture and What It Points To" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, October 30th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Cutting, Exerting. An Introduction" (5 of 28)

#### OCTOBER 16TH - 23RD, 2021

Saturday, October 16th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Reading of Bendowa part three" (3 of 28)

Sunday, October 17th: "SAkN "Root Cycle One" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Activity" (teisho 3 of 6)

Monday, October 18th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing a Grove" (Dharma Talk 59)

Thursday, October 21st: "The Touchstone 21, Mahavairocana (part 2)" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, October 23rd: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Reading of Bendowa, conclusion" (4 of 28)

#### OCTOBER 9TH - 16TH, 2021

Saturday, October 9th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Reading of Bendowa part two" (2 of 28)

Sunday, October 10th: "SAkN "Root Cycle One" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Space" (teisho 2 of 6)

Monday, October 11th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing a Tall Tree" (Dharma Talk 58)

Thursday, October 14th: "The Touchstone 21, Mahavairocana (part 1)" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, October 16th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Reading of Bendowa part three" (3 of 28)

#### OCTOBER 2ND - 9TH, 2021

Saturday, October 2nd: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Reading of Bendowa part one" (1 of 28)

Monday, October 4th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing a Gathering of People" (Dharma Talk 57)

Thursday, October 7th: "The Touchstone 20, Fudo Myo-o (part 2)" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, October 9th: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Reading of Bendowa part two" (2 of 28)

#### SEPTEMBER 25TH - OCTOBER 2ND, 2021

Saturday, September 25th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "You Turning the Wheel of the Way" (teisho 44 of 44)

Monday, September 27th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing a Dangerous Road" (Dharma Talk 56)

Thursday, September 30th: "The Touchstone 19, Fudo Myo-o" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, October 2nd: "Drawn In, Moving Forth": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Bendowa: A Talk on Exerting the Way": "Reading of Bendowa part one" (1 of 28)

#### SEPTEMBER 18TH - 25TH, 2021

Saturday, September 18th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Rujing's Silver Coins" (teisho 43 of 44)

Sunday, September 19th: SAKN "Root Cycle One" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Explanations" (teisho 1 of 6)

Monday, September 20th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing a Road Free of Dust" (Dharma Talk 55)

Thursday, September 23rd: "The Touchstone 18, Vastness" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, September 25th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "You Turning the Wheel of the Way" (teisho 44 of 44)

## SEPTEMBER 11TH - 18TH, 2021

Saturday, September 11th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin:&nbsp; "Hongren's Maintaining the Mind, part three" (teisho 42 of 44)

Monday, September 13th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing a Straight Road and Seeing a Dusty Road" (Dharma Talk 54)

Thursday, September 16th: "The Touchstone 17, Samanthabhadra" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, September 18th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin:&nbsp; "Rujing's Silver Coins" (teisho 43 of 44)

## SEPTEMBER 4TH - 12TH, 2021

Saturday, September 4th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin:&nbsp; "Hongren's Maintaining the Mind, part two" (teisho 41 of 44)

Monday, September 6th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing a Dusty Road" (Dharma Talk 53)

Thursday, September 9th: "The Touchstone 16, Manjusri" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, September 11th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin:&nbsp; "Hongren's Maintaining the Mind, part three" (teisho 42 of 44)

## AUGUST 28TH - SEPTEMBER 4TH, 2021

Saturday, August 28th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Hongren's Maintaining the Mind, part one" (teisho 40 of 44)

Sunday, August 29th: SAKN: Five Spheres of SAKN by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "4th and 5th Spheres, Everywhere and All At Once" (6 of 7)

Monday, August 30th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing a Twisting Road" (Dharma Talk 52)

Thursday, September 2nd: "The Touchstone 15, Ceaseless Activity" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, September 4th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin:&nbsp; "Hongren's Maintaining the Mind, part two" (teisho 41 of 44)

## AUGUST 21ST - 28TH, 2021

Saturday, August 21st: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Hongren's Teaching" (teisho 39 of 44)

Sunday, August 22nd: SAKN: Five Spheres of SAKN by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Guest Meets Host" (5 of 7)

Monday, August 23rd: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Seeing a Downhill Road" (Dharma Talk 51)

Thursday, August 26th: "The Touchstone 14, Karuna" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, August 28th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Hongren's Maintaining the Mind" (teisho 40 of 44)

#### AUGUST 14TH - 21ST, 2021

Saturday, August 14th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Hongren's Name and Nature" (teisho 38 of 44)&nbsp;

Monday, August 16th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "When on the Road" (Dharma Talk 49)

Thursday, August 19th: "The Touchstone 13, Living in the Space of Maitri" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, August 21st: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Hongren's Teaching" (teisho 39 of 44)

#### AUGUST 7TH - 14TH, 2021

Saturday, August 7th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Mazu's Old Hometown" (teisho 37 of 44)

Sunday, August 8th: Sunday, July 25th: SAKN: Five Spheres of SAKN by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Practising Nothing" (4 of 7)

Monday, August 9th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "When on the Road" (Dharma Talk 49)

Thursday, August 12th: "The Touchstone 12, The Practice of Taking Care" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, August 14th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Hongren's Name and Nature" (teisho 38 of 44)&nbsp;

#### JULY 31ST - AUGUST 7TH, 2021

Saturday, July 31st: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Furong's Gruel" (teisho 36 of 44)&nbsp;

Monday, August 2nd: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Setting out on the Road" (Dharma Talk 48)

Thursday, August 5th: "The Touchstone 11, Entering the Space of Maitri" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, August 7th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Mazu's Old Hometown" (teisho 37 of 44)

#### JULY 24TH - 31ST, 2021

Saturday, July 24th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Yangshan's

Circles" (teisho 35 of 44)&nbsp;

Sunday, July 25th: SAKN: Five Spheres of SAKN by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Content and Context, 1st and 2nd Spheres" (3 of 7)

Monday, July 26th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Taking Up the Almsbowl" (Dharma Talk 47)

Thursday, July 29th: "The Touchstone 10, Serenity Is Not Special" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, July 31st: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Furong's Gruel" (teisho 36 of 44)

JULY 17TH - 24TH, 2021

Saturday, July 17th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Guishan's Mountain" (teisho 34 of 44)

Sunday, July 18th: SAKN: Five Spheres of SAKN by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Donshan's Wu-Wei" (2 of 7)

Monday, July 19th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Picking Up a Walking Staff" (Dharma Talk 46)

Thursday, July 22nd: "The Touchstone 9, Honestly" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, July 24th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Yangshan's Circles" (teisho 35 of 44)&nbsp;

JULY 10TH - 17TH, 2021

Saturday, July 10th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Changqing's Twenty Zafu" (teisho 33 of 44)&nbsp;

Saturday, July 10th, "Yaza 2013: What Comes Out At Night" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin&nbsp;

Monday, July 12th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Washing the Face with Water" (Dharma Talk 45)

Thursday, July 15th: "The Touchstone 8, The Nobility of the Truth" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, July 17th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Guishan's Mountain" (teisho 34 of 44)

JULY 3RD - 10TH, 2021

Saturday, July 3rd: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Xuansha's Jewel" (teisho 32 of 44)

Sunday, July 4th: SAKN: Five Spheres of SAKN by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Exploring Spaces" (8 of 8)

Monday, July 5th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Washing the Hands in Water" (Dharma Talk 44)

Thursday, July 8th: "The Touchstone 7, Faster Than the Speed of Thoughts" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, July 10th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Changqing's Twenty Zafu" (teisho 32 of 44)&nbsp;

JUNE 19TH - 26TH, 2021

Saturday, June 19th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin:&nbsp;  
"Shitou's Hit" (teisho 30 of 44)

Sunday, June 20th: SAKN: Dimensions of Space by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Outshining" (7 of 8)

Monday, June 21st: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "When Going to the Toilet" (Dharma Talk 39)

Thursday, June 24th: "The Touchstone 5, Washing Rice with Water" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, June 26th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin:&nbsp;  
"Daixin's Stupa (teisho 31 of 44)

JUNE 12TH - 19TH, 2021

Saturday, June 12th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin:&nbsp;  
"Huike's Standing" (teisho 28 of 44)

Monday, June 14th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "When Chewing on a Toothstick" (Dharma Talk 38)

Thursday, June 17th: "The Touchstone 4, The Three Natures" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, June 19th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin:&nbsp;  
"Shitou's Hit" (teisho 29 of 44)

JUNE 5TH - 12TH, 2021

Saturday, June 5th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin:&nbsp;  
Bodhidharma's Transmission part 2" (teisho 27 of 44)

Sunday, June 6th: SAKN: Dimensions of Space by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Space is Not a Space" (6 of 8)

Monday, June 7th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko O-sensei: "Taking a Toothstick in Hand" (Dharma Talk 38)

Thursday, June 10th: "The Touchstone 3, Sticks and Feathers" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, June 12th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin:&nbsp;  
"Huike's Standing" (teisho 28 of 44)

MAY 29TH - JUNE 5TH, 2021

Saturday, May 29th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin:  
"Bodhidharma's Transmission part 2" (teisho 27 of 44)&nbsp;

Sunday, May 30th: SAKN: Dimensions of Space by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Dimensionless

Space" (5 of 8)

Monday, May 31st: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Putting on the Kesa" (Dharma Talk 37)

Thursday, June 3rd: "The Touchstone 2: Countless" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, June 5th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Bodhidharma's Transmission part 3" (teisho 28 of 44)

MAY 22ND - 29TH, 2021

Saturday, May 22nd: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Bodhidharma's Transmission part 1" (teisho 26 of 44)

Sunday, May 23rd: SAKN: Dimensions of Space by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Dimensions of Mental Space" (4 of 8)

Monday, May 24th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Putting on Lower Garments" (Dharma Talk 36)

Thursday, May 27th: "The Touchstone 1" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, May 29th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Bodhidharma's Transmission part 2" (teisho 27 of 44)

MAY 15TH - 22ND, 2021

Saturday, May 15th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Xuefeng's Rousing the Mind" (teisho 25 of 44)

Monday, May 17th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Lowering the Feet and Resting" (Dharma Talk 34)

Thursday, May 20th: "The Point of the Posture and What the Posture Points to" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Saturday, May 22nd: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Bodhidharma's Transmission part 1" (teisho 26 of 44)

MAY 8TH - 15TH, 2021

Saturday, May 8th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Emperor Xuan and Huangbo's Slap" (teisho 24 of 44)

Sunday, May 9th: SAKN: Dimensions of Space by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Dimensions of Bodily Space" (3 of 8)

Monday, May 10th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Lowering the Feet and Resting" (Dharma Talk 34)

Thursday, May 13th: "Vain and Vanished" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei. Mondo, part 1

Saturday, May 15th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Xuefeng's Rousing the Mind" (teisho 25 of 44)

## APRIL 24TH - MAY 1ST, 2021

Saturday, April 24th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Xiangyan's Bamboo" (teisho 22 of 44)

Sunday, April 25th: SAKN: Dimensions of Space by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Opening the Space of Understanding" (1 of 8)

Monday, April 26th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Practicing Insight" (Dharma Talk 32)

Thursday, April 29th: Reading of "Scattered Poems", Part 1 by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei

Saturday, May 1st: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Linji's Pine Trees" (teisho 23 of 44)

## APRIL 17TH - 24TH, 2021

Saturday, April 17th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Nanyue's Stainless Realized Practice" (teisho 21 of 44)

Monday, April 19th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Crossing the Legs" (Dharma Talk 30)

Thursday, April 22nd: "The Bridge" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei

Saturday, April 24th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Xiangyan's Bamboo" (teisho 22 of 44)

## APRIL 10TH - 17TH, 2021

Saturday, April 10th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Body of Joy" (teisho 20 of 44)

Monday, April 12th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Sitting Up Straight" (Dharma Talk 28)

Thursday, April 15th: "Life and Death and All That" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Change" (2 of 2)

Saturday, April 17th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Nanyue's Stainless Realized Practice" (teisho 21 of 44)

## APRIL 3RD - 10TH, 2021

Saturday, April 3rd: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "This Intimate Place" (teisho 19 of 44)

Sunday, April 4th: SAKN: Infinite Infinities by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Bright Darkness" (7 of 7)

Monday, April 5th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "When Setting Out a Place to Sit" (Dharma Talk 28)

Thursday, April 8th: "Life and Death and All That" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Ring Around the Rosy" (1 of 2)

Saturday, April 10th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Body of Joy" (teisho 20 of 44)

MARCH 27TH - APRIL 3RD, 2021

Saturday, March 27th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Your Hair's On Fire" (teisho 18 of 44)

Sunday, March 28th: SAKN: Infinite Infinities by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Practising Infinite Infinities: Sagara Mudra Instruction" (6 of 7)

Monday, March 29th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "When Entering a Hall" (Dharma Talk 27)

Thursday, April 1st: "Mind the Gap" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei

Saturday, April 3rd: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "This Intimate Place" (teisho 19 of 44)

MARCH 20TH - 27TH, 2021

Saturday, March 20th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Traces of Tracelessness" (teisho 17 of 44)

Sunday, March 21st: SAKN: Infinite Infinities by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Points of Experience" (5 of 7)

Monday, March 22nd: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Receiving the Complete Precepts" (Dharma Talk 26))

Thursday, March 25th: "Freedom and Tyranny" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Mondo - The Makeup of Coercion" (4 of 4)

Saturday, March 27th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Your Hair's On Fire" (teisho 18 of 44)

MARCH 13TH - 20TH, 2021

Saturday, March 13th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Hard Luck Stories" (teisho 16 of 44)

Monday, March 15th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Receiving Instruction from their Teacher" (Dharma Talk 25)

Thursday, March 18th: "Freedom and Tyranny" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "The Language of Self-Image" (3 of 4)

Saturday, March 20th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Traces of Tracelessness" (teisho 17 of 44)

MARCH 6TH - MARCH 13TH, 2021

Saturday, March 6th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Fachang's

Stupa" (teisho 15 of 44)

Sunday, March 7th: SAKN: Infinite Infinities by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Huntun's Faceless Face" (4 of 7)

Monday, March 8th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Receiving Guidance from a Practice Advisor" (Dharma Talk 24)

Thursday, March 11th: "Freedom and Tyranny" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Mondo (Discussion)" (2 of 4)

Saturday, March 13th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Hard Luck Stories" (teisho 16 of 44)

#### FEBRUARY 27TH - MARCH 6TH, 2021

Saturday, February 27th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "The Old Nest" (teisho 14 of 44)

Sunday, February 28th: SAKN: Infinite Infinities by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "The Wonton" (3 of 7)

Monday, March 1st: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "When Receiving Novice Precepts" (Dharma Talk 23)

Thursday, March 4th: "Freedom and Tyranny" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Overthrowing the Inner Dictator" (1 of 4)

Saturday, March 6th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Fachang's Stupa" (teisho 15 of 44)

#### FEBRUARY 20TH - 27TH, 2021

Saturday, February 20th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "The Old Buddhas" (teisho 13 of 44)

Sunday, February 21st: SAKN: Infinite Infinities by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Infinite Points of Chaos" (2 of 7)

Monday, February 22nd: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Taking Refuge in the Harmonious Community" (Dharma Talk 22)

Thursday, February 25th: "The Tiny Book of Stopping and Looking" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Balance" (Dharma Talk 3 of 3)

Saturday, February 27th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "The Old Nest" (teisho 13 of 44)

#### FEBRUARY 13TH - 20TH, 2021

Saturday, February 13rd: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Giving and Receiving Tracelessness" (teisho 12 of 44)

Monday, February 15th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Taking Refuge in the Teachings" (Dharma Talk 21)

Thursday, February 18th: "The Tiny Book of Stopping and Looking" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei:

“Vipashyana” (Dharma Talk 2 of 3)

Saturday, February 20th: “Turning the Wheel of the Way” by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: “The Old Buddhas” (teisho 13 of 44)

FEBRUARY 6TH - 13TH, 2021

Saturday, February 6th: “Turning the Wheel of the Way” by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: “The Work of the Way” (teisho 11 of 44)

Sunday, February 7th: SAKN: Infinite Infinities by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Unfolding, Enfolding" (1 of 7)

Monday, February 8th: “Every Breath You Take” by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: “Taking Refuge in the Buddha” (Dharma Talk 20)

Thursday, February 11th: “The Tiny Book of Stopping and Looking” by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: “Samatha” (Dharma Talk 1 of 3)

Saturday, February 13rd: “Turning the Wheel of the Way” by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: “Yaoshan's Chan” (teisho 9 of 44)

JANUARY 30TH - FEBRUARY 6TH, 2021

Saturday, January 30th: “Turning the Wheel of the Way” by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: “Yunju's Bothering” (teisho 10 of 44)

Sunday, January 31st: SAKN "The Anatomy of Awakening" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Feeling into Knowing: Sagara Mudra Samadhi" (9 of 9)&nbsp;

Monday, February 1st: “Every Breath You Take” by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: “When They Formally Leave Home” (Dharma Talk 19)

Thursday, February 4th: “Maintaining the Way” by Ven. Shikai  Zuiko o-sensei

Saturday, February 6th: “Turning the Wheel of the Way” by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: “The Work of the Way” (teisho 11 of 44)

JANUARY 23RD - 30TH, 2021

Saturday, January 23rd: “Turning the Wheel of the Way” by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: “Yaoshan's Chan” (teisho 9 of 44)

Monday, January 25th: “Every Breath You Take” by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: “Donning Monastic Robes” (Dharma Talk 18)

Thursday, January 28th: “The Bridge” by Ven. Shikai  Zuiko o-sensei

Saturday, January 30th: “Turning the Wheel of the Way” by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: “Yunju's Bothering” (teisho 10 of 44)

JANUARY 16TH - 23RD, 2021

Saturday, January 16th: “Turning the Wheel of the Way” by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: “Zazen is

Zazen” (teisho 8 of 44)

Sunday, January 17th: SAKN "The Anatomy of Awakening" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi:  
"Strategies of Transcendence" (8 of 9)&nbsp;

Monday, January 18th: “Every Breath You Take” by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: “When Shaving  
Their Hair" (Dharma Talk 17)

Thursday, January 21st: “Zen is Not Kidding” by Ven. Shikai&nbsp; Zuiko o-sensei

Saturday, January 23rd: “Turning the Wheel of the Way” by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: “Yaoshan's  
Chan” (teisho 9 of 44)

#### JANUARY 9TH - 16TH, 2021

Saturday, January 9th: “Turning the Wheel of the Way” by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: “Not  
Someone Else” (teisho 7 of 44)

Monday, January 11th: “Every Breath You Take” by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: “Shedding the  
Clothing of Householders” (Dharma Talk 16)

Thursday, January 14th: “The Posture of Practice” by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: “Kinhin: The  
Dignity of the Buddha” (Dharma Talk 2 of 2)

Saturday, January 16th: “Turning the Wheel of the Way” by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: “Zazen is  
Zazen” (teisho 8 of 44)

#### JANUARY 2ND - 9TH, 2021

Saturday, January 2nd: “Turning the Wheel of the Way” by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: “If Parshva  
Doesn't Inspire You...” (teisho 6 of 44)

Sunday, January 3rd: SAKN: Being Between Being&nbsp; Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "The  
Corpses, the Komyo Shingon, and the Crescent Moon" (6 of 6)

Monday, January 4th: “Every Breath You Take” by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: Requesting  
Ordination” (Dharma Talk 15)

Thursday, January 7th: “The Posture of Practice” by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: “Zazen” (Dharma  
Talk 1 of 2)

Saturday, January 9th: “Turning the Wheel of the Way” by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: “Not  
Someone Else” (teisho 7 of 44)

#### DECEMBER 25TH - JANUARY 2ND, 2020

Saturday, December 26th: “Turning the Wheel of the Way” by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: “Big  
Kasyapa” (teisho 5 of 44)

Sunday, December 27th: SAKN: Being Between Being&nbsp; Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Rebirths"  
(5 of 6)

Monday, December 28th: “Every Breath You Take” by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: “Going to  
Advisors and Teachers” (Dharma Talk 14)

Thursday, December 31st: “The Four Great Vows” by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: “Limitless

Awakening" (Dharma Talk 4 of 4)

Saturday, January 2nd: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "If Parshva Doesn't Inspire You..." (teisho 6 of 44)

DECEMBER 19TH - 26TH, 2020

Saturday, December 19th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Shakyamuni Buddhas" (teisho 4 of 44)

Sunday, December 20th: SAKN: Being Between Being&nbsp; Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Practising Between-Being" (4 of 6)

Monday, December 21st: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Being Without Struggle" (Dharma Talk 13)

Thursday, December 24th: "The Four Great Vows" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Dharma Gates" (Dharma Talk 3 of 4)

Saturday, December 26th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Big Kasyapa" (teisho 5 of 44)

DECEMBER 12TH - 19TH, 2020

Saturday, December 12th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Not Now This Now That" (teisho 3 of 44)

Sunday, December 13th: SAKN: Being Between Being by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Being-Between Being" (3 of 6)

Monday, December 14th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Move Past Householder's Life" (Dharma Talk 12)

Thursday, December 17th: "The Four Great Vows" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Endless Obsessions" (Dharma Talk 2 of 4)

Saturday, December 19th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Shakyamuni Buddhas" (teisho 4 of 44)

DECEMBER 5TH - 12TH, 2020

Saturday, December 5th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Upholding Activity" (teisho 2 of 44)

Monday, December 7th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "If in Danger or Difficulty" (Dharma Talk 11)

Thursday, December 10th: "The Four Great Vows" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "All Beings" (Dharma Talk 1 of 4)

Saturday, December 12th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Not Now This Now That" (teisho 3 of 44)

NOVEMBER 28TH - DECEMBER 5TH, 2020

Saturday, November 28th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "The Most Important Thing" (teisho 1 of 44)

Sunday, November 29th: SAKN: Being Between Being by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Death is Unthinkable" (2 of 6)

Monday, November 30th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "In Gatherings or Crowds" (Dharma Talk 10)

Thursday, December 3rd: "The Four Noble Truths" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Practice" (Dharma Talk 4 of 4)

Saturday, December 5th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Upholding Activity" (teisho 2 of 44)

#### NOVEMBER 21ST - 28TH, 2020

Saturday, November 21st: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "But then that's just me" (15 of 15)

Sunday, November 22nd: SAKN: Being Between Being by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Full Moon Fades" (1 of 6)

Monday, November 23rd: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "When Giving Something Away" (Dharma Talk 9)

Thursday, November 26th: "The Four Noble Truths" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "End It" (Dharma Talk 3 of 4)

Saturday, November 28th: "Turning the Wheel of the Way" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "The Most Important Thing" (teisho 1 of 44)

#### NOVEMBER 14TH - 21ST, 2020

Saturday, November 14th: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "Practicing Beyond Buddha" (14 of 15)

Sunday, November 15th: SAKN: Being Between Being by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Full Moon Fades" (1 of 6)

Monday, November 16th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Ascending a Balcony" (Dharma Talk 8)

Thursday, November 19th: "The Four Noble Truths" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Grasping" (Dharma Talk 2 of 4)

Saturday, November 21st: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "But then that's just me" (15 of 15)

#### NOVEMBER 7TH - 14TH, 2020

Saturday, November 7th: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "Sitting Up Straight" (13 of 15)

Sunday, November 8th: SAKN: Infinite Infinities by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Infinite Points of Chaos" (2 of 7)

Monday, November 9th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Adornments" (Dharma Talk 7)

Thursday, November 12th: "The Four Noble Truths" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Life is Suffering?" (Dharma Talk 1 of 4)

Saturday, November 14th: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "Practicing Beyond Buddha" (14 of 15)

#### OCTOBER 31ST - NOVEMBER 7TH, 2020

Saturday, October 31st: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "You are what is True" (12 of 15)

Sunday, November 1st: SAKN: Infinite Infinities by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Unfolding, Enfolding" (1 of 7)

Monday, November 2nd: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "In the Rooms of Palaces" (Dharma Talk 6)

Thursday, November 5th: "Sitting and Walking" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Flowing" (teisho 3 of 3)

Saturday, November 7th: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "Sitting Up Straight" (13 of 15)

#### OCTOBER 24TH - 31ST, 2020

Saturday, October 24th: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "All at Once and Again and Again" (11 of 15)

Sunday, October 25th: SAKN: Tathagatagarbha by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Bodhicitta" (4 of 4)

Monday, October 26th: "Every Breath You Take" by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei: "Amusement" (Dharma Talk 5)

Thursday, October 29th: "Sitting and Walking" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Water Moves Water" (teisho 2 of 3)

Saturday, October 31st: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "You are what is True" (12 of 15)

#### OCTOBER 17TH - 24TH, 2020

Saturday, October 17th: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "Not the Path of Birds" (10 of 15)

Sunday, October 18th: SAKN: Tathagatagarbha by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Bodhicitta" (4 of 4)  
Monday, October 19th: "Return to the Root" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
Thursday, October 22nd: "Sitting and Walking" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Simplicity" (teisho 1 of 3)  
Saturday, October 24th: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "All at Once and Again and Again" (11 of 15)

#### OCTOBER 10TH - 17TH, 2020

Saturday, October 10th: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "The Path of Birds" (9 of 15)  
Monday, October 12th: "Not Fade Away" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
Thursday, October 15th: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Spiders Life Death and Understanding" (71 of 71)  
Saturday, October 17th: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "Not the Path of Birds" (10 of 15)

#### OCTOBER 3RD - 10TH, 2020

Saturday, October 3rd: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "True Centre" (8 of 15)  
Sunday, October 4th: "SAkN: Tathagatagarbha" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "The Flash of Knowing" (2 of 4)&nbsp;  
Monday, October 5th: "Measureless" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
Thursday, October 8th: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Ordinary" (70 of 71)  
Saturday, October 10th: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "The Path of Birds" (9 of 15)

#### SEPTEMBER 26TH - OCTOBER 3RD, 2020

Saturday, September 26th: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "What's That Smell" (7 of 15)  
Sunday, September 27th: SAKN "Presencing the Open Body" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Opening Past Everything" (5 of 5)&nbsp;  
Monday, September 28th: "Just a Moment" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
Thursday, October 1st: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Easy Difficult" (69 of 71)  
Saturday, October 3rd: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "True Centre" (8 of 15)

#### SEPTEMBER 19TH - 26TH, 2020

Saturday, September 19th: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "Radiance In Between" (6 of 15)

Sunday, September 20th: SAKN "Presencing the Open Body" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Opening Past Everything" (5 of 5)&nbsp;

Monday, September 21st: "Here is Not a Direction" by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Thursday, September 24th: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "A Jewel in Bright Light" (68 of 71)

Saturday, September 26th: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "What's That Smell" (7 of 15)

#### SEPTEMBER 12TH - 19TH, 2020

Saturday, September 12th: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "You Look Fine" (5 of 15)

Monday, September 14th: "Every Breath You Take": Ven. Shikai Zuiko sensei's Comments on "The Practice of Purity": "Goals" (Dharma Talk 4)

Thursday, September 17th: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Feeling" (67 of 71)

Saturday, September 19th: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "Radiance In Between" (6 of 15)

#### SEPTEMBER 5TH - 12TH, 2020

Saturday, September 5th: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "The White Mould Sutra" (4 of 15)

Monday, September 7th: "Every Breath You Take": Ven. Shikai Zuiko sensei's Comments on "The Practice of Purity": "Spouses and Children" (Dharma Talk 3)

Thursday, September 10th: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin: "Exposure" (66 of 71)

Saturday, September 12th: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "You Look Fine" (5 of 15)

#### AUGUST 29TH - SEPTEMBER 5TH, 2020

Saturday, August 29th: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "The Drum of the Sky" (3 of 15)

Sunday, August 30th: SAKN "Presencing the Open Body" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi: "Opening Past Everything" (5 of 5)&nbsp;

Monday, August 31st: "Every Breath You Take": Ven. Shikai Zuiko sensei's Comments on "The Practice of Purity": "Parents" (Dharma Talk 2)

Thursday, September 3rd: "Before Thinking: Foundations of Zen Practice" by Zen Master Anzan

Hoshin: "Shadows and Colours" (65 of 71)

Saturday, September 5th: "Rhythm and Song": Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Commentaries on Dongshan Liangjie's "Hokyo Zanmai": "The White Mould Sutra" (4 of 15)

## Remembering Reality

Dharma Talk by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, January 24th, 2004

Sometimes the Teachings can seem so endless and complex that we can forget what they are about. Essentially, what they are all about is remembering reality. The Pali word for memory or remembering is "sati", as in "Satipatthana." In Sanskrit it is "smriti" and "nen" in Japanese. But "memory" in this context, is not remembering some "thing", but rather refers to our capacity to remember. If we did not have this capacity of memory, we would not be able to function. None of us would be able to understand what I am saying because we all would have forgotten the meaning of one word before I spoke the next.

But fortunately, in the moment of hearing a word you are able to recognize the meaning of the word and remember it as the next word is spoken. In recognizing it you are making use of memory. But this does not involve having to "go back" in memory to understand what each word means. Wouldn't that be dreadful - if on hearing a word we had to go back in memory and replay our 2nd grade teacher explaining a definition? And then go rummaging around for the meaning of the next word, and the next? The reason we don't have to do this is because, of course, the information is already known. Everything that we have experienced is already known and so there is no reason to constantly reference back to prior experiences. However, this is what we will tend to do much of the time. This is why it is so easy for us to confuse the recognition of this moment with the recognition of a previous moment.

Anything can trigger associations of past history. Zen Master Anzan Hoshin says, in Class 14 of the "Development of Buddhist Psychology" series,

There is nothing in the ability to recognize which leads to a deadening of our experiencing. In fact, it can show us the richness of it, that, you know, this thing is much the same as this thing and as that thing so in fact it can lead us to connections which actually deepen our appreciation of what we are experiencing rather than deadening it, just as memory can be something that we dwell in rather than experiencing what is actually going on, rather than being open to the people that we

are meeting now and the situations that we are experiencing now, we can just be involved in some nostalgia or wishing that things were the way that they were or the way that we would like them to be and on and on and on, so that we are completely dissociated from this moment. Yet at the same time, a memory arises now and is part of this moment. This moment contains the past. So these things can be things, which act as bonds, and fetters or they can be aspects of the richness of our life.

That last sentence is very important. "So these things can be things which act as bonds and fetters or they can be aspects of the richness of our life." Unfortunately, we will often choose to view ourselves and the world around us in terms of what we think we already know. Everything can remind us of something else and even something as simple as seeing a colour can evoke associations of past experiencing.

For example, in the moment of seeing the colour red, we may for a flash of time recognize the richness and vividness of the colour, but then reduce it to an association about Aunt Vi's red lipstick bleeding into the age lines around her mouth and the boredom we experienced as she repeated stories about her trivial little life over and over and over again. Of course, it doesn't occur to us at all that we are doing the same thing - telling ourselves stories about our own trivial little lives over and over and over again. Yet the colour red has nothing to do with any of this. It is completely empty of all of our associations, our thoughts and our feelings about it. It is simply - red; and there is no need to add anything to it. Adding anything to it takes away from the seeing of it. It is right here, right now and the seeing of it is seeing this moment of present experiencing.

Each moment rises and then falls and in its rising, its falling is already present. This moment rises and is gone and now it is this moment; and it is now; and now; and now; and now; right here; and here; and here. New, fresh, bright. You have never been here before, have never experienced the light as it is in this room at this moment. It might look familiar, but that is only because you are able to remember certain details about the room, enough to be able to recognize objects, just as you are able to recognize the meaning of each word as I speak it. But in turning that recognition into familiarity, we can cut ourselves off from the richness and directness of experiencing. Self-image backs away and curls itself into what Dogen zenji calls our "old nest of ideas."

When we are mindful of these sensations in this moment, we remember reality, right here, right now. Mindful of these colours and forms and sounds, we remember reality right here, right now.

Mindfulness is opening to this moment of present experiencing. It is practising the directness of each moment as it is. Remembering reality through practising mindfulness is not "going back" to what we think we have already learned about practice, or the moment, or what we think reality is.

Even "Mindfulness" can become part of the repertoire of states that self-image, the structure of contraction, uses to play out its basic ignorance concerning itself and its world. But mindfulness is

not recalling the memory of how we experienced mindfulness in the past. It is not a memory. It is an activity, something that we must practice in this moment, meeting each moment as it is, as we are, new and fresh. It is what is true, right now, right here.

Zazen, kinhin, bowing, chanting, the Daruma-kata aiki, the 1700 teisho and classes Roshi has presented, Dharma Talks presented by Dharma Teachers and by a new shuso, meeting with a practice advisor, a Dharma Teacher or Zen Master face to face or in an email exchange - this is what all of these Teachings are pointing to - the brightness and freshness of this moment.

The traditional Meal Chant that we use is one such Teaching. It is called the "Gokan-no-ge: the Five Remembrances" or the "Five Reflections." "Go" means "five"; "kan" means "remember"; "no" means "of" "ge" means "chant or "gatha."

We will recite the chant now:

This meal arises from the labour of all beings,  
may we remember their offering.

Delusions are many, attention wanders,  
may we justify this offering.

Greed arises from self-cherishing,  
may we be free in moderation.

This offering sustains us, gives us strength,  
may we be grateful.

We use this strength and attain the Way.

Prajnaparamita!

We will begin with the first sentence, "This meal arises from the labour of all beings." What does this mean? It means what it says. "This meal arises" means just that. It means this meal in front of us, right here, right now is the presencing of awareness in itself arising as this moment, as this meal, as you reciting the chant.

Despite our preference to think of the Dharma realized and Taught by the Buddha and the Awakened Ancestors of the Lineage of Transmission as something elusive and unattainable, and as something we will "get to later", here it is right here, right now. Here we are right here, right now. Waking Up is Waking Up to our lives as they are, in this moment. As Roshi often says, "If not now, when? If not here, where?"

Looking into a bowl of soup, the colours and shapes of the ingredients swirl, the fragrant steam fills our sinuses and with the first spoonful, flavours dance across the tongue. The Dharma is in our eyes; it's in our mouths and it's up our noses. It presences as the experiencing of the sensations of the hand as we lift our spoons.

If there is a sense of separation, of not really being able to experience or appreciate the directness of experiencing, this is also just something that we need to notice and practise with. We tend to hold ourselves back and away from what is being presented to us, moment after moment, glossing over the details of our experiencing. We can feel the sensations of the body, open to the colours and forms and sounds and yet, even as we practice opening to them there can still be this sense of separation. As though we, or perhaps some "thing" is holding back. That sense of separation, the perception that there is some "thing" between us and what we are experiencing, buffering things, needs to be recognized and practised with. It is that sense of separation that reduces everything, renders it meaningless, that washes all of the colour out of our lives. That "thing" is self-image, the perception of a "self" or an "I" that is at the centre of our experiencing, that pretends it is doing the experiencing. It recoils and refuses to participate in even something as simple as eating a meal or walking, or sitting, or standing or laying down. It is distrustful, suspicious and it pisses on everything. Sorry if you don't like the "p" word, but that is a very accurate description of how self-image behaves. It is, as Roshi once said, rather like the guest served a meal by the host, choosing to stub their cigarette out in a plate of fried eggs.

Whether you are being served a meal or have prepared it yourself; whether it is made from fine ingredients or leftovers, the food in front of you is the presencing of Awareness in itself, presenting itself as food. It should be prepared as well as is possible, served beautifully and eaten in mindful recognition of this life, this moment, this meal, this opportunity to practice.

"This meal arises from the labour of all beings, may we remember their offering." What is meant by "the labour of all beings"? To begin with, what is a being? A human being is a collection of systems of knowing, many small systems of knowing which interact with each other, such as blood and bone and tissues and skin. But there are other systems of knowing which also interact with one another to maintain a structure. Plants, water, air, these are all beings. The sun, the moon, the planets within our solar universe are beings, each made up of small systems of knowing.

What is the "labour" of all beings? Well, beginning with the human contribution to this meal, there are countless beings I could list: farmers; those who harvest crops; those who work in mills and processing plants; those who package and organize the distribution of food; truck drivers; shopkeepers and clerks; those who cook our food. And that is just listing a few of the more obvious beings who labour on our behalf.

But as I mentioned above, the word beings is not limited to the human variety. If not for the position of the sun relative to our planet, we could not grow food; the moon and other planets positioned as they are, absorb the impact of meteors that would otherwise destroy this planet. The labour of this whole solar system contributes to the gravity and atmosphere that enables life here. This is vast labour.

Then there are smaller systems of knowing, such as the worms which aerate the soil; insects

whose labour contributes to the pollination of plants; the micro-organisms that are needed for fertile soil.

When we really look into who or what it is that makes this meal possible, we realize that each thing is dependant on every other thing; that each thing interpenetrates every other thing. We are looking at the Renge-zo or Lotus Matrix World which includes all beings everywhere, and so we simply say, "all beings."

The next phrase of the first Remembrance says, "may we remember their offering." I have always found the use of the word "may" interesting. "May", to me, implies that nothing is guaranteed, nothing is for sure. There is the possibility of remembering that experience is rich and deep and wide, but will we? Will we remember that there is more to our experiencing than the little scraps and husks that we reduce it to? Will we make the effort to at least flash on the countless beings who contributed to this meal, to acknowledge their offering? This is where your labour and mine come in, and the labour I refer to is our practice in this moment.

The next Remembrance is, "Delusions are many, attention wanders, may we justify this offering."

There is tremendous wisdom in these words. Delusions are many and attention does wander. How many nonsensical thoughts and feelings have we taken seriously? How many states and storylines have we identified with? How many dreadful situations have we landed ourselves in because we identified with them? Seeing this is why we chose to practice. Remember?

The view that we can take, that eating a meal is a "break", a time to separate ourselves from reality and become self-indulgent is very strange. And these days, of course, it is not uncommon to almost completely disconnect attention from the fact of eating by reading or watching TV at the same time. Not that I am saying that there is anything wrong with doing that as such, because we can eat and read at the same time and be mindful. But very often there is no mindfulness whatsoever and the TV or book becomes simply a way of ignoring that the bodymind is eating. Food becomes a backdrop for whatever else is going on. How strange and how out of touch with reality is that when we consider that if we did not eat we would die, that this food enables life?

So how do we justify this offering? How do we bring about something in our lives that justifies or comes forward to answer what is offered? We offer it back to all beings by practising. And we had thought it was just for us, all about us? Hahahahaha! No. Nothing is. We are each what is alive as all lives, all beings. And so is everyone else.

Speaking of things being all about us, the next Remembrance says, "Greed arises from self-cherishing, may we be free in moderation."

Self-cherishing describes the obsessiveness of self-image. Self-image sees everything in terms of "me-me-me". This obsessiveness will often express itself in the habitual ways we choose foods,

prepare them and our eating habits. For instance, what we might call exercising our "freedom to choose" by eating absurd amounts of food at one sitting is obsessiveness; it is being bound by the habits and patterns of self-image. To be free in moderation means to be free of obsessiveness. It means choosing wisely and taking only as much as is needed. But this teaching, as with all of the Five Remembrances is not limited to food, of course. It applies to everything that we do.

The Fourth Remembrance is, "This offering sustains us, gives us strength, may we be grateful". This Remembrance reminds us that this food is the offering of the labour of all beings, that it arises through the activity of numberless beings throughout the ten directions. The gratitude that is spoken of here is not just some feeling of collapse. Very often, when we are in a situation in which we think or are told that we should be grateful, we might pay lip service to the word, without really knowing why we should be. It seems that being grateful is the "right" thing to do, and so we will pump up a feeling tone that we think is a close facsimile but resembles something more like, "Yeah, right. Grateful. Check. Anything that smacks of that of course should be noted and practised with, not in order to "make" ourselves feel grateful, but simply because regardless of whether it is about food or anything else, it is an obviously distasteful attitude.

In the context of the chant, "may we be grateful" does not mean feeling a certain way. If we were paying attention to the previous four Remembrances, applying the Teachings in this moment, then there is a direct and simple acknowledgment of what we have been given.

And this leads directly to the last of the Five Remembrances: "We use this strength and attain the Way." We can eat and eat and eat until we explode. And for all of the actual purpose that we might live our lives with, that had might as well be all that happens. We live, we eat and shit and die and everyone forgets about us because they are all busy doing their own eating and shitting until they die.

Or we could use our lives, use each moment, use the energy that we are offered by each meal and each spoonful and each grain of rice to attain the Way. Roshi has spoken of this as "living on purpose." The purpose that Zen offers us is to question into and realize who we are and what each grain of rice is.

The last line of the meal chant is "Prajnaparamita." This is the summation of the whole chant, and is a dedication to all beings, everywhere. Roshi once defined Prajnaparamita in this way:

'Prajna' is the Sanskrit word for what would be 'Hannya' or 'E' or 'Chie' in Japanese. It means Wisdom or Perfect Knowing. 'Jna' means 'knowing' and 'pra' means 'higher' or 'transcendent'. In Zen it is used to mean Awakening. In the Zen Community it is often translated as 'radical insight' or 'perfect knowing' because it is the direct experience of the Awakened nature and so shatters the terms and reference points of self-image.

'Paramita' is the Sanskrit word for what would be 'Haramitta' or 'Haramitsu' in Japanese. It means

perfection; activity arising out of realization of emptiness. Inherent transcendence. In particular, 'The Six Paramitas' (ropparamitsu): generosity or recognizing the fundamental richness of experience (dana, dan, fuse); integrity or living with not-knowing (sila, jikai); patience or the flexibility of not jumping to conclusions (ksanti, ninniku); energy or the limitless uncontrived exertion of experiences (virya, shojin); the practice of inherent freedom through continuous questioning (dhyana, zenjo); perfect knowing or Awake Awareness becoming itself as it is (prajna, hannya).

There is more information about this in the teisho series entitled "The Pathless Path."

Students practising at Dainen-ji or its branch centres and public students practising in other parts of the world can recite the meal chant before each meal just as monastics do. If you are by yourself, you can bring your hands together, palm-to-palm in whole-bodily mindfulness and recite the chant through before beginning to eat. If you are with others, recite it silently. Years ago, when Roshi would eat at a restaurant with someone, he showed us that by just taking our time while picking up a napkin or arranging cutlery we could silently review and recite the Gokan-no-ge before eating without anything standing out to others as unusual. When sitting a retreat, attending a Dharma Assembly or at other formal occasions when meals are served, the chant should be recited twice without including the last line, "Prajnaparamita" and on the third recitation, include it. When eating a snack which does not constitute a meal, you can simply say "Prajnaparamita" while flashing on the meaning of the chant before beginning to eat.

For those monastics training in the Office of the Tenzo, under Roshi's direction, the Go-kan-no-ge has great significance. In his translation of the Tenzo kyokun by Eihei Dogen zenji, it says:

The Zen Monastic Standards states, "The monastic community is the most excellent of all things because those who live thus live beyond the narrowness of social fabrications."

Not only do we have the fortune of being born as human beings but also of being able to cook meals to be offered to the Three Jewels. We should rejoice and be grateful for this.

We can also reflect on how our lives would be were we to have been born in the realms of hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, or jealous gods. How difficult our lives would be in those four situations or if we had been born in any of the eight adverse conditions. We would not then be able to practice together with the strength of a monastic community even should it occur to us to aspire to it, let alone be able to offer food to the Three Jewels with our own hands. Instead our bodies and minds would be bound within the limits of those circumstances, merely vessels of contraction.

This life we live is a life of rejoicing, this body a body of joy which can be used to present offerings to the Three Jewels. It arises through the merits of eons and using it thus its merit extends

endlessly. I hope that you will work and cook in this way, using this body which is the fruition of thousands of lifetimes and births to create limitless benefit for numberless beings. To understand this opportunity is a joyous heart because even if you had been born a ruler of the world the merit of your actions would merely disperse like foam, like sparks.

A "motherly heart" is a heart which maintains the Three Jewels as a parent cares for a child. A parent raises a child with deep love, regardless of poverty or difficulties. Their hearts cannot be understood by another; only a parent can understand it. A parent protects their child from heat or cold before worrying about whether they themselves are hot or cold. This kind of care can only be understood by those who have given rise to it and realized only by those who practice it. This, brought to its fullest, is how you must care for water and rice, as though they were your own children.

The Great Master Sakyamuni offered to us the final twenty years of his own lifetime to protect us through these days of decline. What is this other than the exertion of this "parental heart"? The Thus Come One did not do this hoping to get something out of it but sheerly out of munificence.

"Vast heart" is like a great expanse of ocean or a towering mountain. It views everything from the most inclusive and broadest perspective. This vast heart does not regard a gram as too light nor five kilos as too heavy. It does not follow the sounds of spring or try to nest in a spring garden; it does not darken with the colours of autumn. See the changes of the seasons as all one movement, understand light and heavy in relation to each other within a view which includes both. When you write or study the character "vast," this is how you should understand its meaning.

If the tenzo at Jiashan had not thus studied the word "vast," he could not have woken up Elder Fu by laughing at him. If Zen master Guishan had not understand the word "vast," he would not have blown on dead firewood three times. If the monk Dongshan had not understood the word "vast," he could not have taught the monk through his expression, "Three pounds of flax."

All of these and other great masters through the ages have studied the meaning of "vast" or "great" not only through the word for it but through all of the events and activities of their lives. Thus they lived as a great shout of freedom through presenting the Great Matter, penetrating the Great Question, training great disciples and in this way bringing it all forth to us.

The abbot, senior officers and staff, and all monks should always maintain these three hearts or understandings.

Interestingly enough, a question about Zen practice that I am often asked by beginning students is, "Is there any feeling in Zen?" This is because they are worried that practising Zen might make them cold and indifferent. Hahahaha.

As pointed out by Eihei Dogen zenji, food is chosen, prepared, and served with great care. He uses the metaphor of parent and child to emphasize the degree of care. I personally don't much care for that metaphor because when one is really practising, the kind of care, intimacy, attention to detail and willingness to practice whole-heartedly far surpasses familial relationships which I can say as someone who is not only a Zen monk and a Teacher but has also been a daughter, a sister, and a mother. At the same time, I can understand why he used it. We simply do not have any models for practice that are accurate. Words can never be what experiencing is.

But they can point us to pay attention to what is going on here. I remember what Roshi said when instructing me in oryoki, the practice of using the traditional set of nested bowls and cloths that we use in sesshin. He said that when he lifts up the bowl and chants "This meal arises from the labour of all beings..." his heart breaks. And that after many years of doing this I would know what he meant. And now I do.

Another chant we recite, the Fukanzazengi, says that we have the treasure of this body and birth. It is here for an instant and vanished in a moment.

I say that if we want to feel that we have truly lived before we die, we must open attention to each moment of experiencing and remember Reality. The taste of practice, the taste of food, these are not different from each other. In tasting food, we taste Awareness in itself. We Wake Up and take the next bite.

Have a good morning.

## Retreats

### To Schedule a Retreat

One week in advance, please email schedule at [wwzc dot org](mailto:wwzc@wzc.org) to schedule a retreat, even if you have made verbal arrangements with a practice advisor or a Dharma Teacher. Emails sent to that address are routed to all members of the Practice Council who will need this information for the purposes of meal planning, preparing teisho for your retreat and planning samu assignments.

Please note that you will need to wear an N-95 or KN-95 mask at all times when you are in the monastery. We will have a limited supply of masks available for purchase if you forget to bring one. They are \$2.00 each so please bring your own mask or some loose change as we will not be

able to make change for you.&nbsp;

Retreats are defined in the following way:

#### Half-day Retreat

You would need to arrive 15 minutes before the actual starting time. Begin at 6:00 a.m., end at noon. Or begin at 9:30 a.m., end at 6:00. Or begin at 3:00 p.m., end at 9:10.

#### Partial Retreat:

You would need to arrive 15 minutes before the actual starting time. Begin at 6:00 a.m., end at 6:00 p.m. Or begin at 9:30 a.m., end at 9:10 p.m.

#### Full retreat

You would need to arrive by 5:45 a.m. Begin at 6:00 a.m., end at 9:10 p.m. Please remember to bring a change of clothes suitable for samu (caretaking practice). If staying overnight, please remember to bring a sleeping bag, a towel and other such necessities. If you have been diagnosed by a medical doctor as having allergies to specific foods, please contact the tenzo, Jinmyo sensei at rengo at gmail dot com, a week in advance of your retreat to inform her of dietary restrictions as this affects food purchases and meal planning.

#### Retreat Dana

Please see the suggested dana amount for full and partial day retreats on this page&nbsp;<https://wwzc.org/information-dana>&nbsp;Retreat dana covers the basic cost of food and other materials. Donations above this figure are very welcome and all donations are tax deductible.

#### Retreat Handbook

You can download the Dainen-ji Retreat Handbook, written by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei, here.

#### Public Students' Retreats

For retreats to be mentioned in the eMirror, public students are asked to send an email to schedule at wwzc dot org after they sit a retreat mentioning the date of their retreat and whether it is a partial, half-day or full retreat. Please also include the name of the city in which you live.

There is also a retreat schedule for public students posted here.

#### Training Sessions and Residential Training

For information on training sessions and residential training please see:

#### Training Sessions

#### Residential Training

&nbsp;

Return to the Root

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, March 25th, 2006

&nbsp;

The "Zenrin Kushu" says, "A jewel in bright light loses its edges." Another way of saying this is the conventional folk saying, "Who gives a fuck what you think?"

This is how Anzan Hoshin roshi began the first Dharma Talk that I heard as an associate student so many years ago. Who is it that is so concerned with the trivial and poisonous nonsense that make most of our thoughts? Is that who we really are? Or is there more to us than just that? When we let the bodymind be completely open to the moment as it is, then we lose the edges that seem to constrain us, contraction drops away, and we are like a jewel filled with and surrounded by luminosity.

He was just saying then what all of the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors have always said. For example, the "Xinxin Ming" or "Trusting Awareness" says,

The more you talk and think about it,  
the more you wander astray.

Stop talking and thinking  
and there is nothing you will not understand.

Return to the root and find the meaning,  
pursuing appearances misses the source.

"The root" means the source of our lives, the vitality and livingness of our lives, the fundamental open ground of experiencing itself.

We return to the root when we face what we are always facing. What is right before our eyes and what our eyes are, our fingers and toes and knees are. Who we are beyond the thoughts and feelings and states that spring up like weeds.

A little story:

A student who was dissatisfied with his practice asked me how to release patterns of contraction. He had read one of my Dharma Talks in which I said "The Roshi has spent thousands of hours with me, literally, showing me how to release past experiences" and misunderstood this to mean that the Roshi had listened to me telling him all of the stories of my life as part of what he imagined to be some sort of ongoing Zen psychotherapy.

That was not the case at all. If I told the Roshi a story about something that I had experienced in the past, he might sometimes listen to the story, but then he would always point out that none of that was going on now and I should stop talking to myself about it. He would show me how my attention was folding and congealing and how to open to reality. This is the same Teaching contained in the "Xinxin Ming":

The more you talk and think about it,  
the more you wander astray.

Often as not, he'd interrupt me in the middle of the story or perhaps even after the first sentence to remind me that none of that was going on now and I could just let go of it. What he was saying over and over and over again during those "thousands of hours" spent showing me how to release past experiences, was that I should pay attention to the details of present experiencing and recognize that I could not be bound by thoughts and feelings and memories if I released them into the open space of Knowing.

This is "shutting up", not by going blank or blocking out a thought or a feeling or a memory, but by actively engaging attention in opening to this moment of present experiencing. Recognizing that any thought, any feeling, any state that is experienced takes place within the context of this moment of present experiencing.

Right now, you are sitting on a zafu. If you notice a thought about the past or perhaps about the future, that thought is taking place within the context of THIS moment of present experiencing. There are colours, forms, sounds, sensations; the whole bodymind sitting on the cushion. This is what is actually going on. Then there are phantom-like representations of experiencing that take the form of thoughts and feelings and states that can be noticed amidst the details of sensations and colours and forms and sounds. Stay with the sensations and colours and forms and sounds. Don't focus on the strands of storylines that come up. Open around them. Use the noticing of them as a reminder to open to the luminosity of experiencing. They don't mean anything about who and

what you are and cannot bind you if you stay with reality.

Release delusion by returning to the root. Let the bodymind open to reality.

If you are talking to yourself about anything at all while sitting, just don't complete the sentence. As the Roshi often points out, conversation is only useful if it is between at least two people. If you are sitting on a cushion having a conversation with yourself about work, or your house, or your children or anything at all for that matter, you are not practicing; you are just doing the same things that confuse you off the cushion. Please: Shut up. If you are talking to yourself about your practice, by verbalizing "feel the breath" or "feel the feet"; or asking yourself questions you've come up with as part of some kind of self-assigned pseudo-koan practice, who are you talking to? Shut up.

Zen is the practice and realization of a radical questioning into the nature of experiences and of experiencing. This can only be done by the whole bodymind. It cannot be done by discursive thinking at all. True koan practice and study can only be engaged in an ongoing relationship between a Teacher and student that uses whole bodily mindfulness as its basis. Question silently into this moment by opening to it as it is.

The "releasing" that Roshi showed me was not about "resolving" anything by figuring anything out. It was simpler than that. It was about learning to recognize that the cause of suffering about past experiences was the habitual story telling that I engaged in and that I needed to stop this. And that the only way to put an end to it was by continuously opening attention around thoughts and feelings and storylines; by shutting up and actually doing the practice. What he taught me was the same Teaching contained in the "Xinxin Ming":

Stop talking and thinking  
and there is nothing you will not understand.

In this way, the storylines and problems and confusions become resolved by rendering the energy of contracted states into the vast energies of the whole of experience.

Those little apparently "harmless" storylines you engage in, the nattering about your day or the people you know or what you have to do later and so forth, are actually a form of insanity that withdraws from reality. Focusing on and following discursiveness and feeling-tones is feeding the same mechanisms that fuel the generation of bigger states and storylines that cause you suffering. Following these seemingly harmless storylines is "pursuing appearances". As it says in the "Xinxin Ming":

Return to the root and find the meaning,  
pursuing appearances misses the source.

To return to the root, we must release the thoughts and feelings and states that clutter the space of experiencing which is the source of our lives. We must shut up. But when I say "shut up" I do not mean that you should suppress thoughts and feelings. Suppression is ignoring something that is noticed. I am not telling you to ignore anything. Releasing is much, much simpler than that.

Paying attention to the details of present experiencing requires a light, open, flexible attention because the details change moment after moment. Sounds rise and fall; the light in the room changes; smells change; sensations change. Feel into whole-bodily sensation and open to the seeing and hearing. Practise opening to all of these details in the same breath, at the same time. With each breath, there will be details that you are not noticing because attention can always open further. If you notice that you were not feeling into the sensations of an area of the bodymind; or that the hearing was not really open or that the eye gaze had narrowed; open to those details now, with this breath. Engage yourself fully in the practice of opening to the luminosity of experiencing. The continuous activity of opening attention is essential because if we are not doing this, we default to following coarse movements of attention. Contracted patterns of attention careen around like a drunk, lurching and grabbing onto this, slipping and catching the edge of that on its way down, then rearing up and throwing itself at this other. Sit up and shut up.

Just as the posture of zazen needs to be balanced and aligned instead of being sloppy and slouching, the mind needs to be balanced and aligned instead of being sloppy and slouching. Physical movements out of the posture need to be noticed and released immediately and movements of attention towards thoughts and feelings and storylines also need to be noticed and released immediately.

As soon as you notice the beginning, the smallest flicker of a storyline, a feeling tone, a state, release it. How do you release it? By letting go of any fascination you have with it and instead of following and propagating it, opening attention to the practice. Any thought or feeling or state that comes up while we are sitting is bullshit, regardless of content. Again, this is not a matter of suppressing anything, cutting off thoughts, trying to make the mind "still" or "calm" or "quiet". It is simply recognizing that thoughts and feelings and storylines do not need our involvement. They will come up while you are sitting, but you do not need to give attention to them. What you do need to give your attention to is the sensations of the body, the colours and forms and sounds. Anything that comes up while we are practising opening attention, anything that seems to pull or tug at attention, anything at all that seems to become the "point" of our sitting needs to be released immediately by opening around it.

We need to release movements of attention towards thoughts and feelings and states as soon as they are noticed because if we wait until we notice that we have been roiling around them for any length of time, we are making things more difficult for ourselves than need be.

We cannot afford to "spin plates" while sitting - vaguely feeling into the breath and perhaps

noticing a few details in the visual field while simultaneously following a storyline. This is plate spinning, not mindfulness.

To practice mindfulness we must shut up and pay active attention to the details of present experiencing.

Returning to the root is very simple. All that we need to do is release attention by not becoming entangled in the weeds of thoughts and feelings and states and storylines by releasing them as soon as they begin to appear.

Don't struggle against thoughts. Don't try to not think. Don't try to think about what not thinking might be like. Just shut up. Just stop propagating the thought.

Return to the root by coming back to reality with this breath, this colour, this sensation, right now.

Let it be simple. Let it be simple. Let it be simple.

Have a good morning

&nbsp;

Simple Minded

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei (Presented While Training as "Ino")

Dainen-ji, March 21st, 1998

Simplicity is not so simple. For example, there is nothing simpler than sitting in zazen. There's not much that we need to do. We just sit with our ears over our shoulders, nose over the navel, aligned. We feel the movement of the breath, the sensations of the body. We pay attention to the details of our experiencing. And, as Zen Master Anzan Hoshin has said, we watch our minds run down the wall. It is simple, but we often don't experience it as simple. So why is that?

The reason simplicity is not as simple as we think it might be is because our thoughts and the ways in which we think are themselves so complex.

Anzan roshi often speaks about simplicity and richness -- and complexity and poverty. He points

out that reality, experience, is very simple, very straight forward and yet at the same time is very abundant, very rich. Our thoughts and storylines however are so entangled that we wind up with a great deal of complexity, but this complexity tends to simplify and reduce our experience. And so our thoughts tend to be like cartoons.

When we choose the limited views of our simple-minded thoughts over the richness of reality, we delude ourselves. For example, compared to seeing someone's face, a caricature of it is a poor imitation. The differences between the reality of seeing someone's face before us and a cartoon-like thought image of it is vast - all the details of colour, texture and nuances of expression. I had an experience recently which will illustrate my point.

Now there's not much that is simpler than walking through a door. If somebody else is trying to walk through the door at the same time, then you pause and get out of the way. But people get into power games about who is going to do what.

The other day, the Roshi and I were at a computer store. We were just walking out, just moving into the doorway, when a young man barreled in and then just stopped right in front of us. The Roshi paused momentarily to see what he was going to do. He came straight at us, just trying to push everything in front of him. He was determined, not even to get into the store, but just that we were going to get out of the way because he was there. So, we moved to one side and let him rush through. The Roshi looked at me and couldn't help but laugh aloud and I just couldn't help it either. It was all just too obvious.

So there is this disparity between simplicity as it actually is and the simple-mindedness that people have when they are wrapped up in their stories and are therefore unable to deal with what is going on. The mind needs to become truly simple-minded, as simple as reality is and then to be open to that richness. But because there is that disparity, because there is that gap or distance between how people usually are and what's really going on, it is very much like the structure of a joke.

It's quite simple to understand how a joke works. It works on two different levels. It leads along a certain plane and then there is a level shift and it is that level shift that we find to be funny. Now, although it is very simple to explain a joke, that explanation wasn't particularly funny because although we can understand the structure and what is generally true about something, it is the details that are actually fun.

How self-image is, is a kind of joke because it thinks that this is what is going on. And it is not. And so, often, when the Roshi encounters this he just can't help but laugh because he gets the joke. He sees who we are, that how we are is an avoidance of the richness of who we are, and how ridiculous the suffering we impose on ourselves is. Much of the time, when he begins to laugh under those kinds of circumstances, the other person begins to laugh too, even though they don't know why. Actually, at the moment that they are laughing they do know why, but later on, when they try to think about it, they don't understand anymore.

The simplicity of zazen shows us how to explore the details of experiencing and through this practise, we begin to really have fun. We begin to realize a freedom from taking the mechanisms of self-image seriously or personally. And we find that when we release them, and allow ourselves to pay attention to our lives as they are, things can become very simple. When things are allowed to be simple, we have much more fun. Our understanding changes and our humour changes.

When we become stupified by the patter of our patterns, instead of continuing to follow along with it or struggling against it, we begin to get the joke. Perhaps we might laugh, or grin, or cry. After all, when we recognize how caught up we were in nonsense a moment ago, it can be a little embarassing. But to who? Who do we think we are when we take that stance seriously? Then we realize that this is another pattern. Ack! What now? Should we laugh, be a good sport about it? Would that be the right "Zen" kind of thing to do?

It is not a matter of laughing at our own expense. It's more like releasing grasping and avoidance and stepping past complexity. You don't have to do anything about the patterns. Simply sit. Simply walk. Simply talk. Simply listen.

Sitting shows us that this moment is simple. This simplicity is richness and abundance. And it also shows us that the complexity of usual mind equals poverty and simplification.

I think that usually if someone were to say to us, "Oh, you are so simple-minded" it would be an insult. It would mean that we are something like foolish or half-witted.

But you know, in the context of practice, "simple-minded" might well be said as praise.

But our practice is beyond praise and blame. It's all much simpler than that.

Have a good morning.

Slip

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, June 23rd, 2012

There is an ancient traditional verse that is very important in our practice and study of Zen. It is

chanted during the evenings of sesshin. It is on the inside of the monastery's Mountain Gate so that you see it on your way out onto the streets to remind you to continue your practice wherever you are. And the characters on the han or wooden block in the Hatto say "Daiji" or Great Matter which is a reminder of the Daiji-no-ge: the Verse of the Great Matter:

The Great Matter is birth and death.

Life slips past and time is gone.

Right now, wake up! wake up!

Do not waste time.

First, I would like to point out that life does not slip past you and time is never gone but is always coming and always going. At the same time, as Anzan Hoshin roshi points out, "you cannot slip past time" and "everything is always forever gone."

In "Wild Time", a series of commentaries on Eihei Dogen zenji's "Uji" or "Being-Time", Anzan roshi said,

Sometimes we even think of time  
as if it were a space.

And we seem to move "from" one time  
"to" another time.

Sometimes we experience time as fragments,  
bits and pieces of time  
—jumbles of memory, of expectations, of projections—  
and because of this  
we experience a sense of gap between ourselves  
and this moment of time,  
this timing of time.

And we do not understand that  
we are the timing of the time,  
the being of time,  
that time is being us.

Because we feel that we are separate from this moment,  
sometimes it seems as if it slips "past" us.

Sometimes it seems so flat, so featureless, so extended  
that we feel we can just bypass it  
to get to the next moment,

the next thing, the next event.

But because time seems to us, sometimes,  
almost as if it were a thing  
it then suddenly looms up  
and we trip over it  
and we find that  
we are behind the time.

That somehow,  
we can't quite catch up with what's going on.

This is all in relationship to a number of points raised by Dogen that can be summed up in the single phrase:

Time is not separate from me and if I am present then so, too, is time.

So it is not really a matter of time slipping away and leaving you behind. In all of this coming and going, we are coming and going too. This is the Great Matter of our lives.

But we keep trying to slip away from it, and from our lives. And the time, the opportunity, to recognize and realize the reality of our lives and the Great Matter of the Buddhas and Ancestors is easily missed.

To self-image, time is an indefinable current that sweeps around us, propelling us forward and back through a kind of space, to where events long gone seem still to exist and events that haven't yet happened hang hazily in the distance in front of us. The current of time seems quite separate from us and yet we are caught in its relentless progression, as it opens portals of opportunity and then slams them shut or keeps them open for far too long without consulting us. A night's sleep is too short, a meeting is too long, money runs out before time, Christmas or spring are too far away, taxes too close, youth blooms, dries out and wrinkles, your fingernails need cutting AGAIN, eating dinner takes less time than the preparation and at times it can seem that 30 minutes of sitting should go on forever or be over in five, but is never over when you want it to be over.

Is this perception of time accurate? Or is it once again, the result of contraction rewriting reality? What is this strange split between what is going on and our sense of time about what is going on? Since we have begun attending to how our experience actually is through zazen and mindfulness we all know that self-image continuously glosses over and blurs the details of experiencing, leaving out most of what is going on to maintain various states. So is this also the case in our perception of time? I think so.

Today, during this Dharma Assembly, there will be moments when you will feel impatient about just sitting on your zafu, or taking the time to take care of your cushions properly, or taking the time to do a bow properly in a doorway. While practising the forms they will bring you face-to-face with your tendency to want to rush past experiencing or to space out and avoid it, to feel that you have to rush to keep up with the flow of time, or choose to dumb yourself down to avoid the pressure of it.

Dogen zenji said,

"Don't believe that "time flies." Don't see a "flowing away" as being the definition of time. If time were just a flowing away there would be no place for the present because it would fall through the gaps."

You have time because you are time. You and time and the pressing of the cushion are not three separate things. You and time and the bow in the doorway are not three separate things. Time bows, you bow, the bow is you and time bowing. Time does not fly. Time goes from the moment to the moment as the the moment.

Shuho Myocho (1282-1336) once said: "We have been separated for so long and have never been apart. We meet each other throughout the day, and do not meet a moment."

In daisan, we meet each other, but the point of daisan is not just to meet each other but to meet each other in and as this moment, to use the opportunity of daisan to practise meeting this moment, which includes all moments, past and future. This doesn't mean you can't speak about your perception of the past or of the future, but recognize that when you speak of past or future you're not going 'to' another place that exists in the past or exists in the future, but instead, you are right here, speaking of a memory or a thought that has the appearance of past or future.

At moments in daisan or a practice interview, when you are asked "how is your practice?" or when you are sitting at your computer writing your practice journal, you can see how you seems to slip and slide about.

"What should I say?"

"What should I write about?"

"What's the point of saying anything? It's all been said before by other practitioners."

"It's not unique, or clever, or bright, it's just the same old, same old".

No, it hasn't been said before, not in this time, not in your words, not as you understand in this moment. Don't slip into recoil. Don't avoid. Step through this portal of opportunity to allow yourself to experience the richness of this moment, with all of its questions and fragments of clarity and confusion. This is what we call "entering a Dharma Gate". Meet the practice advisor or Dharma

Teacher as well as THIS moment and allow attention to fall open as much as is possible without trying to arrange yourself to appear this way or that.

"But I have nothing to say".

Really? You were sitting for 30 minutes. That's 1,800 seconds during which countless more 'mind moments' occurred and you noticed nothing? You've slipped into a state and you'd like me to nod and agree with you? What's really going on when you shut down like that?

On the other hand, you need not have anything to say or to ask, to entertain yourself or to entertain me. It is absolutely fine to have nothing to say if there is no sense of poverty about it and if you are not hiding from the practice, from the Teacher, and from yourself. Just don't be slippery about it. If you are folded back, come out. No matter how tightly self-image constrains you, you can always slip out because all around contraction it is always already open.

During the Dharma Assembly there will be a samu period and you may find yourself sweeping a floor or washing dishes or folding dish towels. You sweep the broom as this time and place and this time and place are the sweep of the broom and of you. You cannot be separate from it, but you will close down possibilities - moments when you could truly practise - if you abstract attention to avoid the experience of it or sweep yourself away in impatience to get the task done or become lost in fixation.

In any moment, whether sitting and doing formal practice, or the informal practice of samu, sitting in daisan or a practice interview, at home, at work, anywhere at any time at all, the doorways of opportunity that open to us do not slam shut because we've run out of time or because time shuts them. Their closing is your avoidance of them, recoiling away from the possibility of stepping through them.

The Roshi says in "Wild Time":

At the edge of each moment,  
on this side the past is gone,  
on this side the future has not happened,  
and in the centre  
is nothing at all  
because this moment is utterly ungraspable,  
is already  
gone.

If you try to stand at the center of this moment, or stretch your arms forward to try to grasp at the future, or clutch at the past, you misunderstand. This moment, the past, the future, are the coming

and going of being time. You are the coming and going of being time. There's nothing to slip through or past or back to.

You might have moments today when you think to yourself "I could have been at home doing yahdah instead of sitting here wasting time sitting on a cushion."

Wasting time? Wasting time is impossible because you ARE time. All that you can waste is yourself. So let's not do that.

Each moment of your life is the only time you are actually alive. Zazen shows us how to be alive to this living, especially when it shows us how we slip and slide and push and pull and struggle and collapse instead of opening to the richness of this life that is you and I and time and space.

We have assembled together to practice the realization of the Buddhas, the Dharma. Let each of us use each moment of this opportunity to enter Dharma Gates beyond number. So, right now: wake up! wake up!

Splat

Dharma Talk by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, September 27, 2008

You swing out your legs, put your feet on the floor, and get out of bed in the morning but splat. You pour a cup of coffee and enjoy the aroma but before you even taste it: splat. You get into the car to drive to work and splat. You sit down on the zafu and splat.

Splat, splat, splat. We can call it all kinds of things - disappointment, sadness, sinking, sleepiness, dullness, torpor, boredom, frustration, unfairness, but what it all comes down to is splat: attention folding in, flattening out.

Standing in line at the grocery store, splat. The line seems to take forever. You read all of the headlines on the magazines that you're not interested in, check out the range of chocolate bars and batteries and disposable razors you have no intention of buying. Splat. The cashier, who has also gone splat, impatiently watches but doesn't help an elderly woman as she slowly fumbles through coins with arthritic fingers. You briefly wonder how your fingers will feel when they become like that, but you don't really want to think about that. Splat.

Walking down the street, "someone" finishes a bottled drink, screws the cap on and considers

their options. They could carry it to the nearest trash can to dispose of it or they could "inconspicuously" drop it here and be done with it. Splat. They drop it in someone's carefully tended flower bed and continue on their way, walking past all of the other splatters left by others who went splat - discarded candy wrappers, drink bottles and dirty Kleenex. But when we go splat, how we feel is all that we are concerned about. We become oblivious to the impact this has on anyone else.

All around us lie the splatters of people going splat - from dirt and grime and peeling paint and shoddy workmanship to decaying infrastructures, famine and war and on and on and on.

Some splats are bigger than others. Some last longer than others. Some are stickier than others. Some are smellier than others. And they can happen anywhere, at any time.

They happen when you are sitting zazen. You might have started out all revved up about the idea of sitting zazen, but halfway through the round that initial enthusiasm is waning because sitting isn't about your idea of sitting or how you feel about sitting. It's sitting - experiencing things as they actually are. So you go from enthusiasm, to wanting the round to end, without noticing at all that you've gone splat. You start talking to yourself about how practice sucks or how your practice sucks; maybe you let yourself sink further and further until you put yourself to sleep. Or maybe you "tough it out" until the end of the round or until you're called for daisan and can ask "What about all of this 'easy and joyful' stuff that Dogen zenji talks about in the Fukanzazengi?"

What comes up when you are sitting is no different from what comes up for you the rest of the time, when you are not sitting. When your attention goes splat during zazen, you also have a direct view into how your attention does that at other times and the opportunity to learn to practise with that instead of just collapsing. Attention is not a muscle. It doesn't get tired in the same way that the body does, from physical exertion. It doesn't have to collapse.

Splat is a form of reactivity, of the three klesas of passion, aggression, and stupidity that self-image poisons its experience with. Much of the time attention grabs at this or pulls at that but much of the time it just, well, splats. Passion and aggression are both a lot of work. Being stupid and just collapsing is easy. We don't even have to try to justify it the way that we do being angry or fearful or lustful. We don't have to have something in specific to collapse about or over. And in fact, being flat or listless can be a great background for other more energetic states to momentarily star in. Boredom can be the supporting cast and set for resentment, longing, sexual fantasy, and many other more vigorous states.

Going splat seems very familiar and solid to us. It seems that way because we can go splat in so many different ways.

Sometimes it seems to be just bland and lifeless. But sometimes there is clearly a strong element of fear to it, fear that it is inescapable, that whatever we do to try to lift ourselves from it, it is

always going to be there, waiting for us to fall down again. And so when we do go splat, there is a tad of "See? Here it is again. Told you so." Self-image, the image we have of ourselves, is a process of contraction and the root of contraction is fear. An aspect of that fear is that we are in some way fundamentally flawed and going splat is proof of that. And of course fear has many threads, among them the "big splat", the death splat.

So maybe we should take a brief look at that one because you're mixing several things up and your thinking is not clear. Yes, one day the bodymind is going to go splat and all of the ways in which it knows are going to come to an end. That will happen and there is nothing you can do to change that. But even when the bodymind is dying, YOU don't have to collapse. You have a choice. You can go out with an "AHHHH!" or you can practise. You may as well practise because whatever fear or pain there is, whatever strangeness there is, is because you will be experiencing yourself in a way that is completely unfamiliar to you, it's not something you will be able to get away from. You're not going to be able to escape what is going on by letting yourself collapse and slide into states of dullness and boredom the way you sometimes do when you are sitting on your zafu. You're not going to be able to let yourself fall asleep and ignore what is being experienced. You're not going to be able to turn away from what is being experienced at the moment of death, so how about learning to practise with your fear now, while you sit on a cushion in a nice clean room and are in reasonably good health? As the Roshi often says, "If not now, when? If not here, where?"

With death, as with anything else that you are experiencing now or in the future, there is what is going on and there is how you are about what is going on. Self-image struggles to create a version of the world that is predictable and controllable through inverting attention. It creates a replica of the world built out of discursiveness, imagery and feeling tones that allow it to ignore reality, ignore the world as it is. And the world that it creates by inverting attention and cocooning itself in states is precisely the world it fears. Sit up straight, open your eyes and see where you are and what is actually going on.

The circumstances and conditions of your life as it really is, change continuously. Nothing is permanent, nothing is fixed and firm. Life is not about you and never has been. It's not personal, but it is also not "against you" or "out to get you". When you are walking down the sidewalk and you trip and fall flat on your face, that does not occur through some plot to make you look or feel foolish. When you stub your toe on a chair, that is not because life is trying to tell you something, though you could learn to pay more attention through that experience. When you go splat in zazen it is not because your practice is bad, it is because splat is one of the states you can and do experience and need to practise with. What matters is not that you go splat, but what you do when you go splat. What matters is to get up again and do so as quickly as possible.

In the text "Immo: Suchness", written by Eihei Dogen zenji, translated by Anzan Hoshin Roshi and Yasuda Joshu Dainen roshi, Dogen says:

The Suchness of sounds and forms is just Such. The body and mind are just Suchness. The Awakened Ones are just Suchness. In understanding Suchness, understand falling down to the ground as Suchness and getting up as Such. Then, falling down is not a problem. There is an old saying that came from India: "If you fall down on the ground, you stand by using the ground to get up. You can't stand up without a ground." This means that if you fall down, you just use what you have fallen down on to stand up again. There is no other way to stand up. This is such good advice that you should wake up just by hearing it because it is the path of liberating body and mind. If you want to know the central point of the enlightenment of the Awakened Ones, here it is: it is like someone who has fallen to the ground using it to stand up. Look deeply into this and you can cut through how you have identified yourself in the past, what you think you are in the present, and what you think you will be in the future and just yield into Suchness.

Wake up to Waking Up by going right through delusion into the Awareness in which it arises otherwise you will be obstructed by some idea about Awakening and be stuck within delusion. If you fall down, use the falling down to get up again. This saying applies everywhere throughout heaven and earth, India and China, throughout the three measures of time and is how Awakened Ones throughout all of time have become Awakened Ones. This teaching leaves nothing unsaid and misses nothing. If you only understand this when things are just so for you then you just haven't understood it; it's as if you have never heard it.

At the very moment that we recognize that we have fallen down, right as we are at that time, we can get up.

If you were to fall into a bog, would you just stay there? Of course not. You would work with the mud, use the resistance of the mud, as a means to free yourself.

During zazen, if attention sinks and goes splat, then splat is your starting point. Use the texture of the state as the ground to push yourself up. Exert yourself. You are not any of the states you experience. Your practice is opening to the context in which all of the states you experience come and go, rise and fall. So open to context. Open to where you are and what is really going on. You are sitting on a zafu. Feel the breath, open your eyes, and practise whole bodymind. Release the commentary about how hard it is to get up because that is part of the splat. Stop talking to yourself about being down and simply get up.

In the midst of any state we experience, we can use the state as the ground to push ourselves up and this is true not only of when we are sitting zazen, but all of the time, in everything that we do. Any moment of experiencing is a starting point. So let's begin here.

Stainless

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, June 9th, 2007

Everything is already open. The characteristic of each moment of experience or "dharma" is that it is annica or impermanent and sunya or empty, transparent and open. Another way of saying this is that everything is "stainless".

The stainlessness of this moment is not only the fact that colours and forms are as they are or that sensations are as they are; the fact is that this moment cannot be grasped. There is no particular angle that you can take upon this moment because it is too vast and it is constantly changing. You arise within it, I arise within it, we all arise within it. When we realize this through our practice then we realize that we too are stainless.

Sitting in the posture of zazen, there is nothing to hold on to. Even if you were to grab onto your zafu to try to hold it firm or hold yourself firmly to it, there is still the zabuton underneath it and the floor beneath that, room all around you and the air and the light and the sounds drifting through the open windows. The moment is stainless, unconditioned, empty of boundary and this is where you can release whatever you are holding. There is no one who can possibly hold, nothing to be held.

The Buddha's Teaching of impermanence is not a feeling about things and it is not theoretical. It is not something that happens to things, let alone something that might or might not happen to things. It is how things always are. Stainlessness is not a mystical shining void, a special place, a special experience. It is what each and every moment already is.

How the bodymind experiences experience occurs as mind-moments. How many details are presenting themselves as you sit here facing the wall? Your noticing of them, when you notice them, even if you are noticing very few of them, is very, very fast. Faster than you can think about them.

As Anzan Hoshin roshi says in the text "The Heart of This Moment",

In this open space, there is little for us to be deluded about; we are not acting out our fabrications and self-deceptions and so we can see them very clearly. Since there is little for them to fix themselves on, they don't have much weight and so we find that they can shift very quickly. Seeing this shifting is an essential part of Investigation. Seeing how attention alights upon one object, and then upon another and another and another. Seeing how these are not one thing and,

although attention is continually being disposed through habit and impulse toward localizing, there is also a quality of shifting present. Despite the fact that attention is continually pulling and pushing, there is no continuity to what is being held, to what is being pushed. There is only this shifting, this changing. The impermanence of dharmas displays itself openly. In each moment of mind, in the arising of whatever presents itself, radical impermanence is revealed.

When we are practicing we can see the movements of attention towards habitual thoughts and feelings and when we choose to open attention through mindfulness practice, when we align with Reality, our actions are more and more guided by Openness itself. But when we stop practising, the space of open experiencing becomes cluttered with storylines and feeling tones; snippets of past experiencing; bits and pieces of current storylines; lumps and chunks of disjointed thoughts and feelings. Contraction leads to further contraction. Sometimes you get angry. You feel misunderstood. You think you know what everything is, what's going on, what will happen. One storyline leads into another and another. It looks like "this" and "this". But you're not seeing anything. It sounds like "this" and "this". But you're not hearing anything. It feels like "this" and "this". But you're not feeling anything. Except the state.

Out of all of details - the infinite range of details you could be noticing - why is this thought so important? Why this feeling? Why this state?

It's rather like this: Let's say you are looking out the window on a beautiful spring day, and you are seeing the leaves and branches of trees, sunlight and billowing clouds and birds. And then you notice a fly on the window screen. You begin to focus on it and the more you focus it, the bigger it seems to you. You can narrow attention so much that it can seem to you that only the fly exists and the world behind it and around it which you were seeing previously seems to disappear completely. But if you release the focusing, the fly doesn't disappear; instead you see the fly together with the window, the trees and sky and birds - you see the fly in context.

Similarly, if you focus on a storyline, the world can seem to disappear. If you release the focusing, the world seems to come back into view. But of course, the world doesn't really "come back into view". It was and is there all along. And when you Wake Up from a thought, "you" don't make the world reappear. You simply stop focusing and seeing sees.

But whether you choose to sit there focusing on a fly or a thought, or whether you choose to open around it to see that the fly is arising together with the whole world, no matter how your attention is in that moment, the world, the fly, you, the room you are sitting in and a vast range of other details are all already present, already occurring simultaneously. Even if you choose to fold attention down and make yourself stupid, the moment is still stainless. All you need do is let go of the focusing and openness is simply how things are.

In reality, you can never be separate from Openness. But you can't make things open. What you

can do is simply release yourself, whole-bodily into the stainlessness of this moment. You can't release yourself into stainlessness by thinking about stainlessness. If you are sitting around thinking about impermanence, this is "gufu-shogyo-zen" or "fool's zen". Emptiness or stainlessness cannot be contained in a thought because not only is the thought empty, stainlessness itself is empty. It's not a some "thing" or a something "else". It is how everything is and all that you can do is shut up, get out of the way, and open to it. How do you open to reality? By practising reality with, as and through the bodymind. Open to the reality of the sensations of the breath, the seeing and hearing. Open to what you are experiencing in this moment. Release attention by opening to whole-bodily mindfulness and by opening to the details of the physical space around the bodymind. Align with reality.

In the "Development of Buddhist Psychology" series of classes, the Roshi says,

The run on from mind moment to mind moment is so rapid and the interaction between these in terms of content (for example smelling something, disliking it, blaming someone for leaving the washroom in such a state, thinking about the person's other faults and then stubbing one's toes, feeling annoyed about that and so on) is so rapid that the actual sequence of the shift from state to state is usually not recognized, let alone the shift from mind moment to mind moment.

Through attending directly to how we experience what we experience, it becomes clear that the conventional understanding of experience is simplistic and primitive because it takes what is really a process of moments of knowing and constructs these into monolithic lumps of content. We then begin to stumble over our own trips about these blocks and structures and feel that the situation has a permanence about it that makes real change impossible.

No matter how we might hide in it, no matter how convinced we might be of this stance, this feeling, this state, they arise and fall leaving us exposed again and again to impermanence, to anicca.

When we wallow about in the muck and mire of self-image and act from the three kleshas of passion, aggression and stupidity, our perception of ourselves and the world around us becomes entangled and obstructed. Experiencing becomes piled up and bundled together in tight, brittle formations of distorted thoughts and feeling tones. Like Jigsaw pieces of that don't fit together, but are forced into shapes to form bleak pictures. And when this happens, we talk endlessly to ourselves about who we are: seeking out blackness, calculating, mapping, propagating a sense of problem and separation. But as it says in a chant written by Joshu Dainen zenji,

Attention, attention.

All is always stainless,

each form is always formless.

Aligning ourselves with the Way,

each dharma is always Buddha Dharma.

The stories that we tell ourselves about ourselves and the world around us form as the congealing of attention into "views" of this and that, but all around these "views", the world extends in all directions. It is only through focusing and narrowing attention and choosing to ignore the context in which a thought is taking place that we can convince ourselves that any view is true, is final, is justified.

If you saw someone sitting in the middle of the road, talking to themselves, hitting themselves with a rock, you might say "Stop talking to yourself. Look where you are." You would recognize very clearly that such behavior is completely insane. But when you are sitting on your zafu, you are doing much the same thing if you are not opening to reality and are instead talking to yourself, torturing yourself with your storylines.

Not long after I began practicing as a student of the Roshi near 17 years ago, I saw someone on a crowded street who made quite a strong impression. It was summer so he was wearing shorts and a T-shirt. But in addition he was wearing an assortment of bags, many, many bags with many many straps crisscrossing his body. And from these bags protruded an assortment of gadgets and wires. He had such things as phones, transistor radios, and many other small items I couldn't identify - dozens of them. From these ran many cables and wires which were also looped around his body. He really was quite an alarming sight and people on the street gave him a wide berth as he looked like a walking bomb, armed and ready to go off at any moment. Except that the majority of his electronic devices were obviously so dinged up that they couldn't possibly work. Completely oblivious to the reactions of those around him, he stopped at a bench and sat down. As I was waiting for a store to open I stood not far away observing him for ten or fifteen minutes as he disconnected and re-connected wires, but it was apparent that nothing would or could work.

I remember being very struck by this man and had various thoughts about how he could have come to be in such a such a sorry state. I was looking at him, and then looking at me, and then looking at everyone else as it dawned on me that through focusing attention, he had become someone obsessed with fixing his own wiring. And that anyone, anywhere, can be equally disconnected from reality through focusing attention. And then I flashed on the range of thoughts, feelings, storylines that I had seen come up for me even while sitting on the zafu and realized that these - these thoughts and feelings and storylines, propagating them, rehearsing them, going over them again and again and again was what caused "me" to crystallize into what I think of as "me" and that all of this stuff must be questioned and released. What seems "normal" is simply what becomes habitual.

As it says in the Jijiyu Zanmai Doka, "Don't follow and become the forms of attention."

We begin practising because we recognize that something about us should change, though we're

not necessarily all that clear about what that is. Regardless of what we want to change or how we want it to change or the fact that what we want to change keeps changing, one thing is clear: we want change. We might start off practicing thinking that we want to change one or two details, a couple of things we don't like about ourselves, but we'll keep the rest. So we try to practice on our own terms, try to bend the practice into a shape that is acceptable to us. We focus on what we like or don't like, but as we continue to practise, what we begin to discover is that it isn't just what we perceive to be the ugly, gristly, uncomfortable bits that need change, everything needs to change. And as it changes, what it changes into also needs to be released to allow a space for further change. The stuff we are "comfortable" with is just as bizarre as the stuff we are "uncomfortable" with.

Much of what we do when we first start practising is basically swapping one state for another. A state comes up that we don't like and then we pump up a feeling of openness to counter it. We get lost in thought and noticing that, don't like what we see so we attempt to pump up a state of silence (a jhana state) to counter that. But once in a while we actually remember to practise the instructions to actually feel the breath, the body, open to seeing and hearing. At first, we keep checking to see what the practice is doing for us, wondering how we are "progressing", but eventually we realize that all of this self-considering must also be released. Trying to measure one's practice is a bit like running around the back yard with a wooden ruler trying to measure the sun or the moon. If you notice you are doing this, stop talking to yourself about yourself and practise. Why? Because the moment is measureless but fleeting and you are wasting time.

When the Roshi says "If it is closed, open around it; if it seems open, open further", he is instructing us to open to the stainlessness of this moment in this moment. This is real change. What does he mean by "open around it"? He means that you should use the noticing of any detail of experiencing as a reminder to release the tendency to focus on that detail and open to the context in which that detail is taking place. If you are focusing on a thought, a feeling, one sound amidst countless sounds you are hearing, one aspect of the visual field amidst the countless details you could be seeing, open attention around that one thing by coming back to the practise of whole-bodily mindfulness, open seeing, open hearing. What the Roshi is talking about is releasing habitual thoughts and feelings and the movements of attention associated with them into stainlessness, opening and opening further, not stopping anywhere, not settling, not making yourself comfortable.

The truly odd thing is that when we become contracted, we really think no one else can see how we are; that no one else can see or feel how we distort and crunch our attention, that no one else can see or feel the circle of sharp knives we slash ourselves and others with. But the truth of the matter is that we are broadcasting how we are all of the time and if we settle into and propagate a state, it will make itself known. Nothing is separate from anything else. Everything arises together, at the same time, and each thing interpenetrates every other thing in the stainlessness of this moment. All around the states you experience, the world extends in all directions, but when you bask in a state all that you will let yourself see is the state. Don't be stupid. Open around it. Stop

talking to yourself about what you think and feel about everything. If you were as interesting as you think you are, you wouldn't bore yourself so much when you sit.

Each day the sun rises and sets; the moon appears and vanishes as the sun rises again. The sky is blue and bright and then clouds gather and shower the earth with rain or snow or hail. The earth shifts, mountain ranges grow and recede, shorelines change. Beings are born and die, wave after wave after wave of beings coming and going. What could be solid in any of this? How could you be solid when your experience shows you the obvious impermanence of all things? How could it be possible that any state you experience could be solid in the midst of all of this impermanence?

I was once speaking with the Roshi about my father, now long dead, about his life, the things he thought important and commented on how strange it is that we struggle and endure and hope and fear and in the end nothing remains. The Roshi said , "Like an equation written on water, vanishing even as it's being written".

Zazen is not just a matter of changing this or that about ourselves. It exposes us to and reveals the fact that change is what we always already are.

I speak and my words are already gone. You don't need to chase after them because you've already understood what you understood in the moment they were spoken. You see the wall, but there is no need for attention to move out and towards the wall, no need for you to try to "organize" the seeing. Just see. You don't need to look further into that moment of seeing because that moment is already gone and you've already seen. You don't need to find "meaning" in what was seen because meaning was already apparent and now there is THIS moment of seeing. It is what it is. It IS the wall. Open to peripheral vision. Just see. You feel sensations, but attention does not need to follow them. Just feel. You notice a thought and you don't need to look further into it. Just open to the experience of whole bodymind sitting on the cushion. Now. And now. Pleasant sensations, unpleasant sensations are felt, bright, distinct, gone. And now? What does it actually feel like to sit here in this moment of stainlessness?

All experiences are stainless when attention is not distorted. All dharmas arise, dwell and decay as one's world. Penetrate each moment of experiencing. Penetrate this moment of breathing; penetrate this wall, this floor, this mind, this world. When you get up from the zafu and walk, you are still walking in this world. All beings are met, all events are rising and falling and this penetration into one's world is the essence of our practice. Our practice is not separate from the world. Our practice is the practise of mind stainlessly arising as world and world stainlessly arising as mind.

Starting Point

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, March 28th, 2009

So let's begin right here.

Right here, right now.

Open to this breath, these sensations, these colours and forms you are seeing, these sounds you are hearing.

And now, let's begin again. Open attention again, to THIS breath, THESE colours and forms, THESE sounds. And again. Now. In each moment we need to begin again.

Each moment of our lives is when - and where - our lives are. Each moment is the starting point for beginning to practise and each moment points to where and when we can practise.

In the teisho series, "Painting Reality" Zen Master Anzan Hoshin says:

Waking up to the possibility of Waking Up like this for even the slightest moment is hotsu-bodaishin, the rousing of the mind which seeks the Way. Sometimes this is called the thought of enlightenment, sometimes the Awakening of intelligence, sometimes enlightenment-finding mind, and sometimes the mind which follows the Way. Following the Way at first often involves finding all of the ways that we follow our own lead and lose our direction, take twists and turns that double back upon themselves. Occasionally we move past these and actually do the practice for a few moments. Eventually, the mind which seeks the Way stops seeking and finds the Way in not seeking. But then it finds that this isn't the Way either. The mind which finds the Way doesn't seek but doesn't not seek. It releases.

When our hands are open, the Way fills them. When we release this, then the Way is our hands. When we release this, then the Way has open hands and we are how the Way unfolds.

You have heard Teachers say over and over that mindfulness is not a state. It is an activity, something we actually do moment to moment. And despite that, we would like to turn it into something that we "have", something we can crank up like a machine and leave it running by itself in the background while we get on with the "really important stuff" in our lives -- our "stuff and things".

But what's going on is really just the opposite. We crank up states about our stuff and things and leave them running in the background. And the foreground. And to the sides. and hanging over our heads. We give so much attention to our henpen, our "stuff and things" that we believe that we are our stuff and things. "My job, my husband, my wife, my problems, my concerns." Oh MY, oh MY oh MY.

Ooops.

Let's start over. Begin again, right here, right now, with this moment, these sensations, colours, forms, sounds.

Where do you think we are going from here? Where is all of this going? Just here, just now. Here and now are the only place you ever are.

Stop with the figuring. The whole problem here is too much figuring. That's never good. You try to figure out the past, but you are only right here, right now, thinking about the past. You try to figure out the future, but you are only right here, right now, thinking about the future. Your thoughts seem to create a sense of movement, of something happening, but you haven't gone anywhere at all and there is nothing happening. You get "lost in thought", but you're not lost. You're sitting right here. See the wall? feel your hands in the mudra?

But I WANT TO FIGURE SOMETHING OUT!

Leave it alone.

Begin again, right now, with this breath, this breath that breathes life; this breath that breathes in the airborne dusts of beings who have come and gone. Soon enough your dust will be in the air too, but for now you can breathe this breath. What does it feel like? What does it really feel like? What do these sensations feel like? Legs crossed, hands resting in the mudra, right here, right now?

A myriad of colours fill the delicate, moist globes we refer to almost dismissively as "eyes". "My eyes". Whose eyes? Oh, you mean this seeing through meat? Do you make the meat see? How could you do that? Certainly not by thinking about it. Open attention now to this extraordinarily spacious, luminous seeing. Allow peripheral vision to fall open. What do you see? What fills your eyes? You see the wall, you see other details to the left, right, up and down all at the same time. Do you also see the seeing? Do you see the graininess to the visual field? Do you see the space between yourself and the wall that also extends in all directions? Just see. Don't squint in judgment of your passing thoughts. Just let seeing see, expansively, generously and stay out of the way.

Another quote from "Painting Reality":

When our eyes open and the world paints the brilliance of colours, then seeing is lit up. Our ears, fingertips, the nuances of sensation of fabric touching the nape of the neck are all alight. There might come the old reaction of shrinking away or of trying to claim and own and carry this brightness back into our old nest of old views where we can rub up against it. But it's just the sensation of fabric against the nape of the neck and so we realize that they cannot get what we usually hunger for from this. After all, these are just ordinary sensations, just colours and forms and sounds and yet they are extraordinary. It is not a matter of having seen something beautiful or luxurious. There is just clarity, vividness, richness to the seeing itself. There is something satisfying about this in itself. If we do not react with the usual greed and aversion, then there is more space allowed for spaciousness to present itself.

Ssshhh.

Stop talking to yourself. Stop looking to see if you have an opinion about what you are noticing. Listen, right now, to the sounds that move as waves moving through space which can be both heard and felt. The world speaks as the sound of bird call, the distant sound of traffic, a voice, an exhalation. Shut up and listen. Open past your chatter by opening attention to what the ears are actually hearing instead of talking over everything. Have you ever been trapped in a room with someone who just will not shut up? They want to go on and on and on and have no idea how boring and tedious they are. Well, when you natter away to yourself endlessly, you're worse than that because you don't just drown out another person. You drown out reality. Shhhh. Listen! Listen right now to what you are hearing with your ears.

You can do this. Everyone in this room is here because at some point or another, in some way or another, each of us have recognized that how we experience experience has something to do with how our attention is arranged. And through doing this practice, we have seen again and again that although we can be brittle, angry, petty, self-consumed, we are also capable of stepping past our states, to open to Openness. And when we do that even for a moment, we have a taste of a kind of friendliness towards ourselves and others, a grateful appreciation of the simplicity and fullness of experiencing and a sense of wonder at simply being alive. And we know that if we could apply that understanding to the rest of our lives, in how we interact with others, in the decisions we make, our lives could be expressions of that simplicity and richness.

And then we forget what it is that we came here to do.

Begin again.

In Shinjin Gakudo: Study of the Way Through the Bodymind, Eihei Dogen zenji says:

"In giving rise to this thought of enlightenment, the entire realm of experiencing arises. Although conditions are rooted in this enlightenment-finding-mind, this enlightenment-finding-mind is never

conditioned. This enlightenment-finding-mind and all conditions are this single hand held out as one hand, and one hand clasping all beings as this single hand. Thus, rouse this thought of enlightenment in all the conditioned realms of being: utter contraction, hunger, dullness, and aggression."

Begin now. Open attention to THIS breath and allow the thoughts to dissipate into the open space in which the bodymind arises. Feel the sensations of the bodymind sitting on the zafu, the sensations of thumb touching thumb in the mudra. The whole posture is dignified and yet so delicate. There are so many subtle sensations. And in feeling into these you are feeling into reality. Before and beyond anything you think or feel, reality must be your starting point.

Wherever you are and whatever you are doing, at any time of the day or night, reality must be your starting point. Don't blunder about making ill-considered decisions, flailing about in distorted interpretations and assumptions about what is going on. You only stir up confusion by doing that. Cut through the swirl of confusion by allowing attention to fall open to the details of things as they are. This is your starting point, whether you are standing in a bank line or having a conversation, at work, at home, everywhere you go, in everything you do. Your practice on the zafu provides you with the information you need to do this. But you need to make the effort to integrate what you have understood all of the time, as much as possible, even when you are not sitting.

"But" (students pretty much always have a but) "This is boring. There has to be more."

Of course there's more, but until you can stay in the room and stop filling up the space with the stuff you toy with, there isn't more than the stuff you toy with. You don't allow enough room for "more". Give up the toys and then we can talk about "more". "More" is not hidden from you. You make yourself unavailable to it.

But here we are again. Come back to right here. THIS BREATH. THESE SENSATIONS. THESE COLOURS AND FORMS. THESE SOUNDS. You want "more"? This is how "more" unfolds. More advanced instruction does not come about because a student is curious. Churning up theories, wishfully trying to stretch your mind into imagined "realms" will get you nowhere. Practising in, as, and through the bodymind, wordlessly questioning into experiencing is how the inherent wisdom of the bodymind can present itself.

No, really. Really, really, really.

You, over there, stop that. Don't fold down into yourself like that. Stay out here with the rest of us, with the rest of the world. You and the world are not separate. Each thing interpenetrates every other thing right here, right now. All there ever is, is right here, right now. Align with this moment of present experiencing. Come out of hiding to be who you really are. You are not your thoughts and feelings.

Nothing obstructs the seeing of the wall and the wall. Nothing obstructs the sensations of the breath and the breath breathing. Nothing obstructs the arising of a sound and the hearing of a sound. But by following and propagating thoughts and feelings, attention can become so coarse that the world can seem obscured.

We start again.

This is the starting point and here is where we can begin, again and again.

Tada!

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, October 24th, 2009

People have all kinds of expectations, not only about how their lives will be, but how today will be, or how this moment will be. But reality is not an idea. It is what it is. Tada.

In the colder autumn air, the trees are changing colour and fallen leaves line the gutters of the streets. And seeing this, we know winter is coming. But although most of us sitting here today have seen this happen again and and again, year after year after year, we don't really know what the cold of winter will actually be like. We have memories of cold fingers, the sound of snow crunching underfoot, memories of having to put on many layers to protect ourselves from an icy wind. But memories of cold are not the reality of cold. It is what it is and we will know cold when it is...cold. Tada. And now, before the snow comes, we see the colour fading from our immediate world as the trees lose their leaves and bare branches stand out black against a graying sky. And mixed into, and swirling along with the leaves in the street, are discarded paper cups, gum wrappers, used Kleenex and the odd sandwich wrapper. All swirling in the wind. Is it beautiful? Is it ugly? Neither. Is it good or bad? Neither. It is Tada.

"Tada" is a Japanese word that means "Just, exactly, of course, just as it is." It is sometimes, as in the Teachings of Eihei Dogen zenji and Anzan Hoshin roshi, used as a synonym for the more technical term "immo" or "tathata" in Sanskrit, which means Suchness. Suchness is the reality of all dharmas, all things or experiences. The "actual nature" is another technical term for this. It means that each thing is sunya or empty of all of our ideas about and knowledge of anything, that it is impermanent, that it is the radiance of the Luminosity of experience.

Impermanence is so blatantly obvious. We see our grandparents die, and as we ourselves age, we see our parents die. We see other people around us die. We know that all around the world countless people die every day. But when someone close to us dies, we are so surprised. We are surprised when our relationships change, when the economy changes, when our environment changes and we are surprised that we have to change and that what we do has to change because of these changes. We are surprised when we become sick, surprised when we let things slide and difficulty ensues. And most of this surprise is due to a conflict that comes about when our ideas about reality do not match up with what reality actually is. Reality is Tada: Things as they actually are. Suchness. Tada.

That itch behind your ear? Tada. That's it. The sensation of your hands resting in the mudra? That's it. The moisture you feel on your tongue? That's it. The movement of the breath? Just as it is. The form of the person sitting next to you? That's it. The release in your neck and spine when you straighten your posture? That's it. The sound of my voice and the quiet pauses between words? Exactly so. In the moment of Waking up from a thought, the recognition that streaming thoughts that can never settle on any one definitive "truth" because all that they can ever be is a continuously changing streaming? That's it. Tada.

The details of each thing stand out clearly and distinctly just as they are and experiencing is new and fresh, moment-to-moment. There is no need to embellish, to ponder, to strategize or hold on to anything whatsoever because each thing that is known is simply being known as detail arising within the Knowing of it. Tada. So simple.

But, of course, if you let attention narrow and focus, the distortion that focusing will produce is far from simple. We make such a big deal out of our stuff....

We can make a big deal out of a yawn: "Y-AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA-W-N".

Out of a sneeze "Ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-Choo!"

Out of a sensation "I have a....headache"; "I'm tired", "My knee hurts".

Out of a feeling tone (whiny, plaintive voice) "Oh but I thought I was supposed to....". "But you told me..."

Out of a stance "I'm right and I know I'm right and that's all there is to it".

Out of a petty memory: "I remember when you did that thing and how it made me feel and I will never, ever forgive you".

We can make a huge deal out of having to get up in the morning.

Out of having to go to bed at night.

Out of having to eat when it is time to eat.

Out of having to go to work.

Out of having to wait for a bus,

Out of which seat we get on the bus,

Out of simply having to sit down or stand up.

We make a big deal over the simplest of tasks.

Before we do them: "Ugh I have to do yada".

While we are doing them: "Ugh, when is this going to be finished?"

And even after we've done them "I did SUCH a good job of that. Never has such a good job been done of that thing by anyone, anywhere, and everyone else should acknowledge that."

We make a big deal of how we look at other people and how they look at us because we think it all "MEANS" something. It "MEANS" something about "ME".

"I am so sad. Look at my mournful eyes, so deep and full of feeling".

"I am so angry, look how I GLARE at you". (that one can be pretty funny).

"I am sick, look how haggard I am, how near death I am".

Just stop with the "yada yada yada." Just tada. Just practise.

But we can make a big deal out of anything and everything, including our practice. We can make such a big bloody deal out of being mindful that instead of just practising it's ME practising.  
Tadaaaaaaaa!

But that's the wrong kind of tada. The richness, the dignity, the intimacy of our experience just as it is, without all of our fabrications and contractions and manipulations is inconceivable. It is literally and completely beyond concepts and ideas and stories. In order to realize this, we need to just let go of our habits of attention in all of the ways they are manifested by body and mind.

The Roshi has pointed out that a sense of a "me" is more directly and basically a "sense of locatedness" and that along with it there is a directionality, as it can seem to us that attention moves from a central point, a "me", out and towards experiences. When this sense of locatedness first begins to form, it is the wordless presumption that knowing moves from "here" to "there" in order to know. And yet, this sense of locatedness as a self can itself be known and so obviously cannot be a "knower" or a "self". It is a freezing or crystallization of attention which is much like a frame and from this frame, attention seems to move out and towards what is known. This is why instead of just practising, it can seem to us that there is a "ME" that is practising.

In Rhythm and Song, a series of teisho on Dongshan Liangjie daio'sho's text the Hokyo Zanmai, Anzan roshi recounts many mondo-kien or encounter dialogues between Great Master Dongshan and his students. One student was Xuefeng, who much later became a great Teacher after receiving Transmission from Deshan who unlike Dongshan did not mind beating students with his staff. But while he was studying with Dongshan, Xuefeng was still full of himself and full of ideas about Suchness and emptiness. Here is one story:

Once Xuefeng was carrying a bundle of firewood. When he arrived in front of the Master, he threw the bundle down.

The Master asked, "How heavy is it?"

Xuefeng said, "No one in the world can lift it!"

Dongshan asked, "Then how did it get here?"

Xuefeng didn't know what to say.

Poor Xuefeng. What a fool. He was a fool because he was trying to use everything around him as equipment to aggrandize himself. Even a bundle of firewood. Even the simple act of carrying it. For him even samu, caretaking practice, was about the profundity of his idea of his understanding of emptiness. What a fool.

In Rhythm and Song, Anzan Hoshin roshi calls out to us from what all of the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors of our Lineage have realized and practised,

Intimacy is revealed when we release. We release when we realize that there is nowhere apart from us that we can drop away all of the things about ourselves that we wish were not the case; all of the thoughts and feelings and strategies that at times we are so tired of, and at others, so convinced of.

It is not as simple as that.

It is much, much, easier than that.

It is the simplest thing.

Nothing is true about us. Our nice thoughts do not make us nice. Our devious thoughts do not make us devious. Our bad thoughts do not make us bad.

A thought cannot make anything.

There is nowhere to hide because there is no need to hide.

There is nothing that is true 'about' us because we are that which is true. We are that which presents itself everywhere as everything and yet is itself nowhere at all, no thing at all.

You are this deep intimacy.

Where have you been?

So please join me in not just saying, but in actually being: Tada.

Is There a Problem?

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Zazen-ji, March 30th, 1996

Is there a problem?

We live suspended in thin air. All around us everything looms. Colours, forms, sounds. People. Buildings. Trees. Cats. Everything is so full and rich and bright. Standing in the midst of the radiance of our lives, we squint. Squinting is a reaction to bright light. If we didn't squint, if we kept our eyes open, they would adjust. And in fact, we need light to see at all. All of the things that we see: colours, forms—are all light. To adjust to this brightness is really just allowing our lives to be as they are. But we don't allow ourselves to do that. Squinting, we view the world with narrowed vision, missing a lot of the details of what we are actually experiencing. Our vision becomes thin and small and uncertain and we know we're not seeing clearly.

To feel a little certainty, we turn things around. We interpret what we see with narrowed vision to be the reality of our world. The fullness becomes thin and flat. To make this sustainable, we make the world a story, a set of descriptions, thoughts and feelings.

Within the tradition of practice this is called dukkha. Dukkha could be translated as unsatisfactoriness, pettiness, suffering, the experience of the unmanageability of reality through approaching experiences as if there could possibly be a self. The Venerable Anzan Hoshin roshi, our teacher, has explained that the roots of the Sanskrit term dukkha are "jur" which means "bad" and "kha" which means "space." So dukkha is "bad space." The primary metaphor is of a carriage that does not work because the axle cannot pass through the wheel. So the Roshi tells us that the dukkha that arises from grasping at entities and objects is an experience of "obstructed space."

In order to make our experiencing of reality manageable, we create a self. The sense of a self is already a problem because, as the Roshi points out again and again and as should be obvious to us all by now, "whatever presents itself as a self cannot be the self. It cannot be the knower because it is just another thing that is known. "So the sense of self already creates a sense of problem. Naturally, like tends towards like. The self tends towards problems because it reinforces its own function of existing as that which cannot exist and so must exist in such a way that it cannot come into question. It does this by distracting itself from itself and focuses on experiences in such a way that they seem to be dense. So, the more dense the sense of problem, the stronger the sense of self.&nbsp;

A sense of problem begins with what seems to us to be very subtle movements of attention. We may recognize that there is something very familiar, very repetitive about our thoughts and feelings, but beyond reacting to the content, we seldom question into what is actually going on.&nbsp;

Everything that we perceive is made up of a myriad of details, of colours of forms, of causes and effects unfolding in a rich, chaotic, playful display. Our perception of what appears does not come from or take place in anything that is solid. Our ability to perceive is made up of a myriad of processes. In Buddha Dharma, one way of detecting the details of these processes is the five skandhas. The word "skandha" means "heap" or "accumulation." The Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi explains that the five skandhas are a way of describing how we experience what we are. The activity of these processes creates the illusion of an accumulation or localization of experiencing. and describe the basis of self-image, the illusion that there is a self doing the experiencing, a single entity in the midst of what is being experienced.&nbsp;

Why don't we see this process take place? Because we can't see it if we squint. Our eyes must be open in order to see it, because this activity takes place very, very quickly. In the space of a second there is said to be 60 mind moments, 60 movements of mind. That's the bad news. Nonetheless, the experience of our Ancestors in this practice has been that even these subtle

structures of attention can be attended to and so attention need not be bound by them. That's the good news.

The five skandhas are: form, basic reactivity, symbolization, habitual patterning and consciousness. In the Development of Buddhist Psychology series of classes, specifically, in classes 15 through 18, the Venerable Anzan Hoshin roshi gave a thorough presentation of these Teachings. I would like to draw on these for the following explanation. However, what I am going to say is by no means complete and I recommend that you study the classes yourself.

The Roshi says that the first of these piles is form skanda, which means "THAT." It means that there is a perception of something, that experience experiences itself as a particular experience but objectifies this event. This is the development of the basic mechanism of self-image, or of how we become confused about who we really are, so that our experience occurs in terms of self and other, this and that. In order to have a subject or self or "this", obviously you must have a "that."

The next skandha, basic reactivity, adds weight to the "that" so that the "this" can be held in place by it. An attitude about the object forms: liking, disliking, or ignoring.&nbsp;

The third skandha categorizes it through "symbolization", trying to figure out what it resembles, if something like it has been experienced before.

With the fourth skandha of "habitual patterning", we decide what to do, how to act, based on what we did before with something that was like what this thing is like.

Then the fifth skandha of consciousness comes into play. This is the area of experience we are primarily aware of, our thoughts and feelings about our experiences.&nbsp;

The five skandhas tell us something about how our experience arises as a piling up of different mental events to create the illusion of certainty and the sense, the image, that there is a self doing the experiencing.

So is there a problem, can there be a problem, when there is no such thing as a single, solid entity who is experiencing the problem? Where could a problem exist? Then what about all the problems we seem to have to make decisions about? If we are not a something in which a problem can exist, do they exist, perhaps separately from us? What are these things that we call problems? What do we actually mean when we use that word? As is the case with so many words we use, the word problem is used as a symbol to represent many different things, most of which are not a problem.&nbsp;

There are circumstances and conditions about which we can't do anything and that is just the way things are. That is not the same as a problem, but that doesn't stop us from entertaining ourselves with the project of self-image by making it look like one. By focussing on something we can in

reality do nothing about, which has nothing to do with us, we can make it appear to have everything to do with us. By nature, self-image is a problem because it does not exist, and so the sense of problem is something which is free-floating and can attach itself to anything, anywhere.&nbsp;

Squinting at a situation which we can do nothing about, we narrow the view further and further. The circumstances and conditions, which are themselves formed from the details of many truths, are reduced to a cartoon-like representation. If we then respond to the situation from that understanding of it, then that version of reality is what we contribute to the situation as a whole. Our actions can literally serve to turn it into the very thing we accuse it of being and think we are struggling to remedy.

A problem is a situation in which we actually need to do something and can do something and we must respond appropriately. But what is this thing that we have to respond to, what is it made of? Everything that happens is part of many processes, becomes a part of many processes. It is the result of a vast number of details of small truths, none of them in themselves the truth. The most effective way to respond to a problem is to respond clearly, directly and most importantly, honestly to what is actually going on, to do what you can and do it as soon as possible.&nbsp;

Because a sense of problem is free-floating, it can attach itself to the simplest of issues. What we will tend to do is think about the problem, turn it over and over, focus and fixate on it.&nbsp;

Our attention becomes arranged in such a way that there is a perception of things being unmanageable. We grasp at our sense of problem, at our suffering and so we suffer. Then we have a new sense of problem because we want to get rid of the suffering. But we can't just get rid of it. If we try to eliminate it, we are just fragmenting our attention further and we can make things very difficult for ourselves. Recognizing that our judgment is impaired by the sense of problem, we may be tempted to just try to cut through it, to act with ruthless determination, mistaking this for mindfulness.&nbsp;

We may hang on to the sense of problem and choose to do nothing. Through this, we can fold down into inertia and render ourselves unable to respond. Our view becomes so narrowed and the sense of problem so broad that we feel incapable of seeing anything clearly. We hesitate and become obsessed with caution, mistaking this for mindfulness.

We may grasp at the sense of problem as being a threat to our life and resolve to do great and heroic things, apply all of our energy to overcoming it, mistaking this for mindfulness.

But this is not mindfulness. This is the activity of the three kleshas of passion, aggression and stupidity, the properties that dull the mind and are the basis for all unwholesome action. Countless options, solutions, theories can arise and they can all seem valid to some extent, even though they can often simultaneously be recognized to be completely insane. So if delusion is so pervasive,

how then can we really recognize what is true, what is the most sane option?

Dogen zenji's Fukanzazengi, which is chanted every evening during sesshin, says "Understand that right here is the display of Vast Reality and then dullness and mental wandering have no place to arise."

We must ground our experiencing in the display of reality right here. If our perception of things does not include information about what is taking place in this moment, we cannot respond accurately to what is actually going on.&nbsp;

The more information there is about what is taking place in this moment, the more accurate our assessment of ourselves, of our abilities, of our relationship to anything that is perceived to be arising. If you think about something, are you doing that in isolation, removed from the reality of what is actually taking place right now?&nbsp;

This can be a very uncomfortable question, because when we focus, when we concentrate on something, we want to be isolated so that we can enlarge upon the sense of problem, blow it up so we can see all the minute details of it, like pixels on a computer screen. We want to be left uninterrupted because we usually approach a problem with a strategy and in order to examine everything about it from that strategy, we cannot be interrupted. The strategy only exists in our own imaginations and any interruption would shatter its existence, our existence as that strategy.

A sense of problem is recognizable because it comes from an angle. It has a central point, a self who is experiencing the dullness and mental wandering.

Can we just do nothing with it? Can we just let it be as it actually is? Can we stay with the sense of problem, the sense of discomfort, of uncertainty, without turning away from it? Can we then open around it and see and hear and feel the fact of the rest of our life, which is the rest of what is available as this moment of experience?

Even if we understand all kinds of things, do we understand what anything actually is?

Being willing to live with our misunderstandings and bringing them face to face with our life as it actually is, beyond what we believe that we understand is an amazing prospect. I think that this is some of what our teacher, the Venerable Anzan Hoshin roshi, has described as shila paramita: "the discipline of living with not knowing."&nbsp;

We don't like that idea much. We want to be certain, we want to feel that we know. So we interpret our experiencing as though we were a central point in the midst of a kind of chaos. In the midst of all this chaos, this not knowing, we would like to think that we know. So we think about the chaos because in our thoughts, we can convince ourselves that we know something.&nbsp;

The most sane and probably the only reasonable response to chaos would be to simply be as tidy as possible in the midst of it. Shoelaces work really well if we take the time to tie them properly. Everything works quite well if we take the time to work with what's going on.

In Dogen zenji's Genjokoan: The Question of Our Lives it says:&nbsp;

No matter how far a fish swims, it doesn't come to the end of the ocean. No matter how far a bird flies, it doesn't come to the end of the sky. Since the beginning, fish and birds have always been one with their elements. When there is a great need, a great use appears. When there is a small need, a small use appears. Thus, the full use of things is always as it is. Wherever something is, it covers its own ground. If a bird cut itself off from the sky it would die. If a fish cut itself off from water it would die. Also, the life of the sky is the bird itself, the life of the water is the fish. The bird is life, the fish is life. We can expand on these examples if we'd like. Practice, enlightenment, short and long life.

What we need to do can come from our experience of what is.

No problem.

Have a good morning.

Thinking About Not Thinking

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei (Presented While Training as "Ino")

Dainen-ji, September 26th, 1997

As a practice advisor, I am often asked, in one way or another, "How can I stop thinking?" And so I've done a lot of thinking about this. Thinking about not thinking is thinking and the notion of trying to stop thinking comes from thinking about it and is a strategy, a kind of thinking.

In the text *The Straight Path*, Zen Master Anzan Hoshin quotes the following from Zen Master Dogen's *Fukanzazengi*, or *How Everyone Can Sit*:

"Think of not-thinking. How do you think of not-thinking? Be before thinking. These are the basics of zazen".

The Roshi unfolds the meaning of this passage in this way:

"This means: No opposites. Zen is not a matter of thinking (shiryo) or of shutting out thought (fushiryo) but of being Before Thinking (hishiryo). Before Thinking means to be prior to experiences in the same way that a mirror is always prior to what it shows even at the moment of showing it. We cannot be anything that we are aware of. We are always the context of whatever content arises. When we release all of our states and our avoidance and identification then we are always right there at the very moment that the world arises, right at this pointless point. Bring together every aspect of mind, everything hidden and everything obvious, and allow each to resolve itself into the knowing of it. This is zazen, the shikantaza of all Awakened Ones".

If reading that were enough, I wouldn't need to say anything further. Although the Roshi provides clear instructions on how to understand our practice in one concise paragraph, we don't do it. Instead, we think about every sentence. When we read, we think we are reading about thoughts and that we should think about them. When the Roshi speaks, he tells us how to practice. When he uses words like "release" or "bring together", or "allow", it's not just good prose. These are technical terms for certain activities of attention. This book "The Straight Path" is a guided tour through the structures of attention we experience and a manual for opening them.

It's all very simple. So simple that we don't know what to think about it. We sit. The longer we sit, the more we see that any thought that comes up is just another thought and that all thoughts arise within the vastness of Awareness. When we think, we are experiencing thinking. Depending on the extent to which we are practicing, there is some awareness of the thinking. If we are not practicing at all, we have withdrawn, obsessed with our stories, recoiling from present experiencing into fabricated labyrinths that lead us nowhere and teach us nothing. When we practice, we can allow the thoughts to rise and fall and know simultaneously that they are only thoughts, without substance, and allow them to be simply a movement, like a breeze rustling through leaves.

Even when the thoughts and feelings are so dense, so confused that we feel as though we can't see our hand in front of our face, we can still see the wall, hear the sounds, see the colours and know that we are in reality, just sitting in a room and there is nothing going on. With practice, even when the thoughts and feelings are about utter desolation, fear, anger, hopelessness, through practice, we can come to know that thinking is just an activity of bodymind, something that it does, like eating or shitting and means nothing about who or what we are. Isn't it odd that when we sit down to eat a bowl of soup, we don't look into it and think "Oh, that's who I am, that's what I mean." When we shit, we don't look into the bowl and say "Oh, that's who I am, that's what I mean." So sorry if this sounds a bit rude but monks aren't quite the sort of people you want to invite to a garden party.

My point is that when we think, we think that's who we are and what we mean. It doesn't occur to

us that if we really were this thought and the meaning of this thought, we wouldn't need to think another, because we would be that all of the time. How many thoughts do we have in the space of a minute? It's worth looking into. And at the end of that minute, who are we, and what do we come to mean? And in the next minute? And the next? How odd that with the experience of countless minutes, we still think that "this thought is true, this is the one".

Often, during practice interviews, when a student asks a question about thinking, there is an accompanying frustration and when I respond by asking "Right now, are you feeling your breath, your hands, your feet?", the frustration deepens. Until they actually allow themselves to do this and then everything shifts and they laugh and shake their heads at how absurd their frustration was.

We hear the phrase all of the time, "open up around it". When we have managed to really shore up our belief in a self by working up a good state all around it to give it a place to be, we don't want to hear this. It seems too expensive to us. And that's true. Opening up around it all will cost us everything. All of our thoughts, our beliefs, our belief in our thoughts, all of it. It will leave us not knowing where we are, and because we are so used to living mediated by our delusions we doubt whether we can support ourselves without them.

But our thoughts and stories have never been how we were really able to actually live: to see and hear and cook and eat and stand up and sit down.

Whatever you or I think about anything is inconsequential. It means nothing about who we are or what is actually going on.

So what is going on here? Are you feeling your breath, your hands, your feet? Are you seeing the colours, the depth of the space in front of you and to the side, above and below? Are you hearing the sounds, the sound of (present sound) of your breath, the breathing of the person next to you? Are you feeling the temperature of the air on your skin?

Thoughts rise and fall and come and go just like the breath comes and goes. We don't need to try to stop thinking in order to practice. We just need to allow ourselves to recognize that the world is unthinkable. That who we are is beyond thought and cannot be captured in the web of our same old stories.

Have you ever noticed how every thought we think is familiar? Every shadowy trail we follow is already known, because we've already followed them in one way or another. Sometimes we might re-combine them in some convoluted way and think that we're thinking something altogether new and brilliant, and get really into it, but it's only a matter of time before we see that these, like every other thought we have ever had, was only the flickering of mind.

Our storylines spin endlessly, but our lives are not a story. Our lives are taking place right here,

right now and the storylines take place within our lives and cannot define our lives. When we sit, we see again and again and again, that there is only what is going on right now and what's going on right now isn't inside any of our thoughts or our feelings. The only place from which we can do anything about anything is only ever right here; the only time we can do anything about anything is always only right now. Right here right now is not a thought

Practice is inconceivable. It can only be understood through doing actually doing it. Anything we think about our practice is just thinking. It's not practice, just more stories.

We love stories, ours and everyone else's. Recently, someone mentioned that they would be interested in hearing my story.

I think you'll enjoy my response. I wrote:

In my story, like everyone else's, there's lots of suffering, lots of nonsense, lots of hard-won wisdom, and more importantly the mystery, to me, of how I got here and what "here" is. The Roshi has spent thousands of hours with me, literally, showing me how to release past experiences. But for that to happen, I had to be willing to show them to him. Exposure - such fear we have of it. Sometimes, when there was too much fear, he would show them to me. I'll give you an example of how subtle this can be. This was a memory that came up when I was walking with him one day. It was almost completely forgotten, and seemed not important at all.

Some background: My mother loved dancing. She used to tap dance during the war, loved Fred Astaire movies, loved swing and so on. She was in England during the war, was in the WAF, so when she was transferred from one base to another, the first thing she would do would be to check out the local dance halls. She was very beautiful, very energetic, and she had a fabulous sense of rhythm.

When I was three, we (my father, mother, older sister and older brother) emigrated to Vancouver. About six months later, we bought a turntable and I discovered Tchaikovsky - the Nutcracker Suite. I think it was the first piece of classical music I'd heard, and I thought it was just fabulous. There was a picture of a doll on the cover. That just made my day. I didn't have any dolls. My parents had very little at that point, so I had dishtowels with a knot tied in them for dolls. So this beautiful sound and the painted dolls on the cover were jewels and I got up and danced for joy. (Though I felt a bit silly doing so).

My mother got really into this. It became a thing we shared. When she had the energy (she was working night shift as a nurse in a mental institute) we put on Tchaikovsky and I would dance and she would say do this, do that and so forth. It was a lot of fun, but it was also very intense.

The memory that came up:

I have a somewhat blurry recollection of the intensity. At three, the wiring isn't working too well, so I had a really difficult time trying to sort out what was my stuff and what was hers and what was true about any of it. It was kind of like standing on a tilted floor -- it was askew, but I didn't know where my sense of balance was coming from, let alone how to articulate it.

What I said to the Roshi did not include any of the details, and what I said was simply this: "When I was little, I loved to dance." That was all.

We were walking down the street at the time. He didn't say anything, just started whistling a piece from the Nutcracker Suite.

I still don't know what to think about this. So many events like this in my life are unthinkable. All of my practice continually points me to That which is Before Thinking, the space of open Awareness in which thinking and not thinking, colours and forms and sounds and birth and death are all coming and going. We don't need to stop thinking and we don't need to follow thoughts. We can just release them. Then we find that they occur in a space bigger than they are and that we can bring all of how we are together as just this moment. And release that into a yet larger space. And so I want to just point out to you that this is what your practice is as well. What do you think about that?

Have a good morning.

The Touchstone 1

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, October 20th, 2012

A touchstone is something that we can use to tell what something is and what it isn't. When we hear the word "touchstone", most people have a sense of what the term means but might not be that clear about it. So, first of all, what is meant by the term "touchstone"?

A touchstone is a simple but reliable tool used to distinguish real silver or gold from look-alikes. A lump of ore pressed against black quartz left a streak of metal that could be compared to other samples to determine authenticity. For instance, most of us even as kids knew about fools gold, or "pyrite" which might have the brightness and shininess of gold, but a quick test with a touchstone would reveal its hardness and brittleness, completely unlike real gold. The word "touchstone" is also used as a metaphor for judging the relative merits of an idea or concept. In either case, what is basically being spoken of is a means of discerning what is true from what is false.

Similarly, we use the touchstone of the breath in our practice, as a means of distinguishing between what is true and what is false. If we are not feeling the breath, then our attention is not open; if we can feel the breath, then we can open attention further to reality. Anything can seem to be true because our thoughts are like fools gold - shiny, shiny. You have only to reflect for a moment on the number of ideas you've had in the past that seemed truly wonderful at the time but turned out to be truly awful to see this is true.

Self-image, as a process of contraction, is very good at distorting context or even creating the illusion of contexts that do not exist in reality. We see this happen each time we get lost in thought, each time we wake up from a storyline about who we are and what everything else is, and what seems to be going on. So we need a way of seeing our experiencing in the light of open, expansive attention, and for this we use the touchstone of the breath.

There are many suttas of the Buddha directly concerned with mindfulness of the breath and this topic has been spoken of in numerous teisho and Dharma Talks presented by the Roshi as well as Dharma Talks by Dharma Teachers and practice advisors. There is extensive instruction during preliminary interviews with students before acceptance and review of the instructions during interviews after acceptance. As well, the Roshi has provided commentary on the Sattipatana sutta in his book "The Straight Path: Zen Teachings on the Foundations of Mindfulness". So this is an extremely important aspect of our practice.

During daisan with students, once they have taken their seat and are settled into posture, I frequently ask if they are feeling the breath. Usually they will say "Yes". But when I ask them where they are feeling the breath I often see confusion in their faces. Sometimes they will place one hand on their midriff, the center of the belly, much as one might do if one were experiencing a stomach ache. At other times they will place their hand in the center of the chest or wave vaguely towards the nose and throat. And they are dismayed when I say "well, that's not what you were instructed to do". I need to keep coming back to this point because it is a very basic aspect of mindfulness practice, but students' understanding drifts and they will often rework or forget the instructions. Not that that's a problem because practice advisors and Dharma Teachers will review the instructions again and again as many times as is needed, just as the Roshi did with us when he met with us in dokusan.

The instructions are to feel the breath at the diaphragm and tanden simultaneously and in the same breath. And to use these sensations as a touchstone to open to the sensations of the whole body sitting, together with seeing and hearing. Simultaneously. In the same breath. Perhaps we should talk a little about why we do this instead of directing attention to the belly or the sinuses or the trachea or upper chest.

The activity of thoughts seems to take place not just in the head, but around the head. We have a cluster of sense bases in the head - eyes, nose, mouth, ears - so the head receives a lot of

attention to begin with. When you are lost in thought, your attention has moved to the area of the head and you can become so absorbed in the swirling of thoughts that you can forget altogether that there is more to the body or to reality than just what's going on in your head.

The activity of feelings and feeling-tones takes place in and around the area of the chest. Feelings and feeling-tones tend to 'pool' in the area of the chest. Thoughts and feeling-tones are not separate. In fact what usually happens is that a feeling-tone will come up and then thoughts will spring up out of the feeling-tone to justify or explain the feeling-tone. The more thoughts you engage in about the feeling-tone, the more you propagate the feeling-tone and the more thoughts it will produce. So a kind of 'loop' forms -- thoughts, feelings, thoughts, feelings, and your attention is drawn into the loop. This is why, when you have a really juicy storyline going, it can seem so difficult to let go of it. It's not enough to try to stop the thoughts because as long as the feeling-tone persists, further thoughts will come up to fill it out. In any event, this area of the head and the chest is a high-traffic area and it receives a LOT of attention.

What feeling the breath and body and opening to the sense fields while sitting zazen reveals and expresses is the open space of your own experience beyond your stories and misunderstandings about who you are. Feeling the breath is a way of undercutting the traffic - the movement of attention - towards the head and chest, and the fascination with the endless looping of thoughts and feeling-tones. Instead, we mark the moment with the touchstone of this breath. We touch the breath and ground ourselves in this moment.

Feeling the breath is not about air-flow. It's not particularly about the movement of air entering your nose, or moving down your throat or filling your lungs. It's about feeling the diaphragm and the tanden. The diaphragm is the large muscle that runs across the top of your stomach, just under the ribcage. It is the movement of this muscle that causes your lungs to fill and empty, and without it, your lungs would be useless sacks. The movement of the diaphragm is quite a large movement and easy to feel.

Feeling the sensations of the tanden together with the sensations of the diaphragm is important because the sensations of the tanden are lower still in the body. To release your storylines, the ways in which you confuse and delude yourself, you must be able to ground yourself in whole bodily sensation.

The tanden is a hand's width below the navel, just above the pubic bone. It's an area of the lower belly that always remains soft, even if you were to tighten all of the rest of the muscles of the abdomen. And the blades of the hands should be in contact with that area of the belly wall if they are positioned correctly in the Dharmadattu mudra. Many people say initially that they can't feel the sensations of the tanden. That isn't actually true. You can feel the belly wall with your hands and you can feel your hands with the belly wall. It's not that complicated. But as your practice continues and attention becomes subtler, what will happen is that you will notice more and more sensations in and around the tanden.

So let's say you're just beginning your practice at the start of a sitting round, or you're refreshing your practice during one, or perhaps when you're doing informal practice. You notice that there are thoughts. Not a problem, just don't bother completing the sentence. Instead be intentional about what you are doing. Open attention to the sensations of the diaphragm and simultaneously feel the sensations lower still, at the tanden. Use these sensations to open to whole-bodily sensation and the seeing and hearing -- all at the same time, all in the same breath. It's not something that's done in 'stages', one thing at a time. Attention can open to many sensations, many details simultaneously and that is what you need to practise. And you need to practise it with each breath, breath after breath, as continuously as possible, throughout your sitting round.

Now, of course you're going to drift. And that's not a problem either. As soon as you recognize that there are changes occurring in your posture, or that your eye gaze has shifted, or that you're starting to follow a storyline, come back to the breath at the diaphragm and the tanden. Use these sensations as the touchstone from which to open to the whole of your experiencing instead of becoming distracted by wandering attention.

Now for a bit of 'trouble-shooting' -- complexities that students bring to this very simple matter of feeling the breath and the tanden simultaneously.

One concern that students raise is that they can't feel the sensations at the diaphragm and the tanden at the same time. That's not true. You do have to practise it though. And the more you practise it, the easier it becomes. If you're used to focusing on one sensation at a time, what you will find is that the sensations change as you open to more sensations. For example: If I told you to focus all of your attention on the middle finger of your right hand (and I mean really focus), you would experience the sensations of that one finger as being quite defined in their own way. If I then said "Okay, so now release the focus on that one finger and allow attention to open to the sensations of the whole hand, as well as all of the fingers while still feeling the middle finger", what you will find is that you can indeed feel the whole hand, all of your fingers, as well as the middle finger. But the sensations of the middle finger will feel slightly different because you're feeling it in the context of the sensations of the whole hand. Similarly, when you feel the breath at the diaphragm and the tanden simultaneously instead of focusing attention on one or the other, you will notice that the sensations of both together seem lighter, more effervescent, not as defined as "this" and "that".

The next area of complexity students fall into is what we sometimes refer to as 'mapping'. "Mapping" involves self-image taking up the stance of a watcher that is guiding and directing your practice. This is what happens when knowing is congealed into the sense of a knower or self or watcher. So what will often happen is that it will come up with a list of 'stuff' for you to pay attention to. It may even MC your sitting, announcing "feel the breath at the diaphragm; now feel the breath at the tanden; now feel your hands". etc. etc. etc. That is no more than habitually and self-consciously watching yourself. Don't follow it, don't avoid it, don't bother struggling with it. If you're

really doing the practice, your attention is much lighter and much quicker than that. By the time it says "Feel the tanden" you're already feeling the tanden. You'll soon realize that there's nobody, no real intelligence that's there listing all of this stuff. It's almost like the words to a song echoing meaninglessly in your mind for no reason at all. It doesn't mean anything about you or your practice or what is really going on. It's just thoughts doing what thoughts do - thinking. Just stay with the instructions and continue to do your practice and it will dissipate by itself.

What often happens is that students will ignore both the diaphragm and the tanden in favour of the belly or upper chest or nose. Or they will skip the diaphragm and direct attention to the tanden; or they will skip the tanden and direct attention to the diaphragm. But anything you do in your practice will have an effect on the whole bodymind, so it's important to understand and apply the instructions as clearly as possible. When I say that changing the instructions, doing something differently has an effect on the whole bodymind, I mean that quite literally.

Over the last twenty years or so of presenting these instructions, I can often tell when a student comes into the daisan room to meet with me, how they are feeling the breath just by the way they walk into the daisan room, their facial expression, their posture, their deportment. The students who skip the diaphragm and direct attention to the tanden are usually engaging in a kind of concentration practice. This tends to make them quite heavy-handed, quite joyless, not only in their practice, but in their lives. The students who skip the tanden and direct attention to the diaphragm will tend to be more spaced out and prone to engage in feeling-tones and storylines, and not just in their practice but in their lives as well.

It's not that we need to cut off all concentration, or cut off all ability to feel. But these must be balanced with the rest of the ways in which we perceive ourselves and the world around us: our sense fields, whole bodily sensation, environmental mindfulness. To use the musical metaphor of an orchestra: Having only piccolos or only bass drums makes for a very dull composition. You need a range of instruments, a range of notes. You have these at your disposal, but your preference is to make use of far less than you are capable of.

Paying attention to the sensations of the breath, the real details of the real breath as it really is just brings about what is actually going on. It is not a matter of drilling down into the sensations to dig up some special thing, some kind of hidden ore that will make us spiritual or saintly. Or to construct some miracle device out of them that can let us float above our real lives. The simplicity of the practice is so honest and direct that it allows us to be really honest and direct. This kind of integrity is really rare, really special, it is certainly more essential and spiritual than what labels itself as being spiritual.

Today, during this Dharma Assembly, please let's use the time we have to practise the Suchness of the posture, the Suchness of breath, the Suchness of our confusion, the Suchness of our clarity. Let's use the precious touchstone of the breath to unfold Suchness and be enfolded within Suchness.

## The Touchstone 10: Serenity Is Not Special

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, June 21st, 2014

At any moment that you recognize that you are lost in thought or are propagating a feeling tone or a state, you can use that recognition as a prompt to come back to the breath and the body, seeing and hearing. Experiencing this moment with the whole body is practising an intimacy of experiencing that comes about only when you simply allow yourself to meet your experiencing as it really is.

Meeting experience as it is might be feeling the breath at the diaphragm and tanden, opening to seeing and hearing while chopping vegetables. It might be opening attention while pulling wads of who-knows-what out of the drain in the kitchen sink because it's not emptying properly. It might be a moment of opening to seeing and hearing and bodily sensation while listening to birdsong as you walk under the canopy of trees on the way to the monastery. Or you might find yourself opening attention while someone nearby is expressing frustration and anger. It might be feeling the breath at the diaphragm and tanden and opening to whole-bodily sensation and seeing and hearing while listening to falling rain, or it might be while measuring out medication for someone who is ill. You don't know, from moment to moment, what will happen, what will need to be done, what someone might say. Yet each moment of your life is a moment of breathing, of feeling, of seeing, of hearing. Each moment is always a moment in which you can simply allow yourself to meet experience intimately.

If you were not practising at all, you might still walk down this street and hear the birdsong and you might still have to pull wads of who-knows-what out of the sink drain when necessary. And you'd still be interacting with other people and their states. But if you are practising, the difference is that you can do each thing you are doing more fully and completely. You can do each task with the whole bodymind instead of doing them with a sense of resentment. You can recognize how your attention is as you do them and choose to release attention into the sensations and colours and forms and the doing of the task instead of recoiling and holding yourself at a distance from it.

Self-image -- or the process of contraction that gives rise to a sense of self -- would much rather think about what's going on than really engage in what is going on. This is because through contraction, the sense of a 'self' sets itself up as the 'knower' of experiencing, as a some 'one' who is separate from what is being experienced.

When you sit zazen you can see this process of contraction and separation quite easily. You might begin by following the instructions to stay with the sensations of the breath and body, to open to seeing and hearing and pay attention to where you are and what is going on. But a few minutes later, you begin to drift into a storyline, in which the sense of self can seem to be at the center of the storyline.

In zazen, again, and again, when you come back to the breath and body, and refresh your practice, you see the storylines fall apart because there is no "one" at the center of experiencing. There is just this moment and the details that present themselves as the exertion of this moment which are constantly changing. Our practice is to release contraction, and instead of recoiling, learn to meet experiencing as it actually is. This is why we begin with this very simple practice of sitting cross-legged in the posture of zazen, opening attention to all of the sense fields instead of ignoring them to pursue internalized states and stances. And this is why, when we practise Anapanasati, or mindfulness of the breath, we come back to the touchstone of the breath, we mark the moment with the touchstone of this breath. We touch the breath and ground ourselves in this moment.

Grounding oneself in this moment doesn't mean hanging on to the moment. It means letting yourself drown in the moment. If you try to hold on to the moment things can get quite complicated. So I will talk about that a little, because it is something that comes up in people's practice at one time or another.

In people's lives there is usually a lot they have to contend with that they don't particularly like. For instance, being bored at work; having to participate in social events they don't want to go to; being immersed in family issues that are not interesting to them.

Zen practice isn't about any of that stuff. But we are instructed to practice while those experiences are going on. So here's where a misunderstanding can creep in.

If you are practising Zen you will see more about your own states. And you will recognize more often when other people are in a state -- because you recognize some of your own. Now, all this stuff that was going on before you started practising - the boredom and arguments and family foibles and all of the rest of it -- that stuff is still going to be going on after you start practising. And what can happen is that you may make the mistake of trying to use your practice as a way of distancing yourself from all this stuff you don't really like.

So, for instance, there is a family member in front of you talking about an issue. It doesn't matter what the issue is. What matters is the stance you might take up relative to that person and the situation. If you recoil instead of releasing, this is not practising. It's taking up a stance about the situation and perhaps about the other person. And if you allow this recoil to continue, it can seem as though you are at a distance from what is being experienced, in a kind of special practice space that they don't share. Because, the story says, you're different. Because, the story says, you

practice and they don't and that makes you superior and special. And if you allow this state and its story to continue, you may actually begin to feel quite serene about the whole thing. But what is being mistaken for a sense of serenity is actually a sense of flattening and withdrawal.

I do want to make it very clear that this has nothing to do with practising. This is merely the acting out of various patterns of contraction with a storyline about practice woven through them.

If you are in a social interaction and this comes up, open around it by coming back to the touchstone of the breath and actually do your practice. If you are in that situation it is because you agreed to put yourself in that situation. So be in that situation with the whole bodymind. If you don't wish to experience that sort of thing again, then you can change the activities you engage in. If you are in a relationship or are married, it is because you agreed to that. You can change that, but if you are going to change it then do it. Don't fence-sit, secretly holding yourself at a distance. Fully participate in your life and if you make a change, then fully engage in and take responsibility for that change. Don't use your practice as a way to avoid your life. This is not how a bodhisattva behaves - it is how self-image behaves.

When students make the mistake of recoiling from their own lives, and from the people around them, to some extent they will recognize that this is not good. And they will ask if Zen is devoid of feeling.

No, Zen is not devoid of feeling. If you are really practising, you will feel more, not less. But genuine emotion, real feeling, is a momentary flash. It does not colour or predispose, so it is not something you can hold on to.

In Anzan Hoshin roshi's translation of the Genjokoan, The Question of our Lives, Eihei Dogen Zenji says:

Gaining enlightenment is like the moon reflecting upon water; the moon isn't wet, the water isn't stirred. With all of its radiance, the moon can still be seen in a puddle. Full moon, vast sky, can both be reflected in a single drop of dew dangling from a blade of grass. Enlightenment does not disturb you just as the moon doesn't ruffle the water. You can no more grasp enlightenment than the dew drop can restrain the full moon, the vast sky. As deep as the drop is, so high is the moon. As to how long such a reflection will last, just consider the water's depth, the moon's light.

We cannot grasp enlightenment and we cannot grasp mindfulness. Mindfulness is only mindfulness if we are really allowing ourselves to meet our experience as it actually is in this moment. It's not something we can 'oversee'. We can only enter into it, moment after moment. It penetrates our lives like sunlight through water and the longer and more deeply that we practice, the more transparent we become. And being transparent to experiencing allows us to see that all experiences arise within a much larger space.

To be transparent means that there is absolutely nothing you can hang on to. It means that none of your thoughts are solid, none of your feelings are solid, none of your views or attitudes are solid.

So when you are practising formally or informally, at home or at work, interacting with other people, the same is true. Practise this transparency by coming back to the breath and body, by opening to seeing and hearing, and allow experiencing to present itself to you. With other people, let them be how they are and don't hold yourself separate from them. Again, if you don't want to be with them you don't have to be. But if you ARE with them and this is what you agreed to, then let yourself fully BE in that situation. Don't be half-assed. You can't sit up straight as the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors if you are half-assed. You need to practise with the whole bodymind, both legs, both feet, both hands, and arms and legs and ears and eyes and the nape of the neck and behind the ears.

You can't do other people's practice for them. Do your own practice. If you just do your own practice, it includes all people that you know, all of the things that you do, all of the colours and forms that you see. In doing your own practice you practise the moment and everything that arises together as the moment. Meet the moment intimately and wordlessly. Don't recoil. Release. In this way you embrace everyone instead of holding everything at a distance.

You can release grasping at them and being entangled by their grasps as well, by embracing them and everything in the intimacy of experience. You are not people's ideas about you and they are not your ideas about them.

Zen practise is not an idea. And it is certainly not the ideas you can have about your practice, many of which are quite contradictory. Zen practice is something that you actually do. And in actually doing it, it does you, it changes you. Not into a special version of you, someone who is not only more spiritual or wise than you were but more wise and spiritual and special than your family and friends. It changes you so that you can live your real life, be a real person instead of a story about yourself, and really meet others beyond your ideas about them. We will explore more of this next time.

Right now, let's sit.

The Touchstone 11: Entering the Space of Maitri  
by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
Dainen-ji, August 22nd, 2014

During the previous Dharma Talk in this series, I spoke a little about the sense of separation that can come up between people, the way in which self-image will set itself at a distance from what is being experienced. That distancing allows us to avoid the directness of experiencing, and in the so-called 'space' between one self and whatever is being experienced, there is lots of room to propagate attitudes and stances about other people or situations.

But allowing oneself to experience the directness of experiencing might seem fraught with difficulty if misunderstood. Self-image is very good at over-simplifying imagined options, making them seem rather cartoon like. Either I "like" this person or this situation and I enter more fully into it because I like it and so I want to grasp as much as I can from it. Or I don't "like" this person or situation so I pull back from it. I distance myself from it. And, all depending on what's going on, liking and disliking might switch around, so that something you like in one moment becomes something you don't like in the next moment.

We have a conversation with someone and we believe that they are someone separate from us; that we are separate from that person. So there is an interiority to how we are. We withdraw and become internalized. From that internalized sense of ourselves, we believe that we have thoughts and feelings that are hidden from the situation. We look out at this person who's speaking to us, this person that we might like in one moment and might dislike in the next.

This is all very harsh, don't you think? It is harsh because when you separate yourself from experiencing by withdrawing and internalizing, the world that is seemingly 'outside' of you seems critical and judgmental and you become critical and judgmental of it.

We can't ever truly meet anyone at all unless we do so with complete intimacy. When we notice we are contracting or internalizing, in that moment of noticing we have the opportunity to make a choice about how we are. And the only choice that is really a choice is to open. Instead of furthering that sense of separation, we can instead choose to allow a quality of "maitri" or "friendliness" to guide our interactions. Maitri is a kind of basic friendliness, a kind of warmth, which the Roshi has often described as a sense of space within which you can allow for however you are to come and go, without pushing or pulling at it. Maitri means recognizing our fears, recognizing our hopes, openly. It means learning to really bring mindfulness and confusion together.

Anzan Hoshin roshi said, in *Maitri Bhavana: The Practice of Compassion*:

Maitri does not mean indulging in our thoughts and feelings. It means seeing the tendency to indulge, to identify, to propagate, and it sees also the tendency to avoid and cover over and reject and suppress. But it trusts the clarity of the moment itself. It trusts the dignity of experience itself. It trusts and knows that the moment itself, our experience itself, is so vast and limitless that a contraction, a lie, a contortion, a clenching, must unfold itself within such vastness when it is recognized. Just as a fist must unfurl into an open hand at some point - you can only keep it

closed for so long - so in the same way, Maitri attends to what is arising openly and brings that quality of openness towards what is arising so that what arises dwells and passes away, so that what comes goes. Effortlessly, painlessly, spontaneously, freely.

It's not about pumping up a feeling of warmth as a feeling tone, or creating some sort of warm, fuzzy state of compassion. It is about actually practising. Because if you really practice, Maitri is an aspect of what your practice opens into. But it can only really come about through the activity of practice.

A practical example of this might be practising with the eye gaze while you are speaking to someone. By "practising with the eye gaze" I just mean to be mindful of how the gaze is. I do not mean to take up a special way of looking at people, a Zen trick to play with the eyes or anything like that. People are often looking for a special tool, or more accurately a kind of "secret weapon" that other people will not have in order to have an advantage. Practising with the eye gaze, or the posture, or the breath, or the whole bodymind in the whole moment is not a matter of playing tricks or playing with weapons but of seeing through and thus not being tricked. We often trick ourselves, or try to trick others, or we fall for or even submit to the tricks of others. Practising is noticing how we are adding these tricky tactics because we are following the strategies of hope and fear of trying to maintain an image of a self instead of allowing the reality of the open body, the open mind, and the open moment.

Many people will maintain a tight eye contact with others, almost as if they feel like potential prey in the presence of a predator. This is because the sense of separation is already quite strong and is being generated by self-image, which itself is fear. Instead of propagating this, practise opening and relaxing your eye gaze while speaking to other people. Open to the sensations of the touchstone of the breath, feel into the sensations of the diaphragm and tanden and the whole bodymind in whatever posture it is in. Open to hearing and open to peripheral vision so that you can see the space around them - to the left and right and up and down all at the same time. Release the focusing of attention by seeing the details within the space, and also seeing the space between you and they, the same space that opens up all around and behind them. In doing this, you are literally 'giving them space'. And although they won't know what it is that you're doing, they will likely experience a feeling of friendliness from you because you're giving them space. You're not using a spotlight - you're using soft lighting and this is much less harsh than the usual focusing of attention. That kind of focusing is harsh because it's way too much. When you focus on someone like that, you're making them the most important thing in the world and they're not. They're just part of what's going on. They and the room you're standing in, the colours and forms and sounds and sensations you're experiencing arise together with them within the whole of experiencing. For you the visual field will be softer, less 'aimed and directed', which will allow the bodymind to relax more. It's really quite alarming for the bodymind when attention congeals into patterns of anxious focusing.

So as you can see from this example, maitri is not a feeling or an attitude. It is a friendliness

towards oneself and others that comes about through actually doing the practice in the midst of interactions. But maitri can be applied to much more than just eye gaze. I simply used that as an example because it's quite easy to talk about.

But even when there is no one else there, when you are telling yourself stories about yourself or stories about other people, these are times when maitri is needed. And just as you can release the focusing of the eyes to practice this when speaking with another person, you can release the focus of attention on yourself when you notice you are talking to yourself. The same narrowing is going on and needs to be released.

Now I'll read a brief passage from the Roshi's Commentaries on the The Xinxin Ming, which so clearly describes the distortion that occurs through contraction.

The Roshi says:

Your presumptions about yourselves as selves cloud your eyes like cataracts and so you see things that are just not there. Sometimes they might indeed be beautiful like flowers. But more often they are much more threatening: like flesh eating flowers looming around you and images of scowling faces and fear of plots and rejections, feeling unloved and unlovable, and loving someone for what you want them to be and hating someone for not being what you want them to be and on and on. Self-image clouds the eyes, dims the ears, numbs the body and dreams its nightmares of hope and fear throughout the day and night. What we hope for is an hallucination that eludes and tortures us, what we fear is a phantasm that can take any form from a telephone call to a telephone that doesn't ring to saying the wrong thing to a wordless gasp that we wake up in the morning with.

As attention narrows and fixates, discursive storylines that fit the edges of that narrowing squirm into place and fill what is experienced with meanings that seem certain because they fit so well. Anything can seem to be true if the information that would contradict it is simply ignored. When we practise opening fixation we find that many if not yet most of our presumptions begin to fall away because without that narrowness there is nothing to hold them in place. It can even seem to make sense to shove our heads back into the mouth of the flesh eating flower of our fantasy because, well, we grew up with it. The bite of the acids is so familiar it seems like the smell of mom's home cooking. We are so addicted to grasping after and pushing away the fleurs du mal of our delusions that we don't know what to do with our hands without them.

So Sengcan says, "What are you? Crazy? Stop that. Put your hands in the mudra. Sit up straight.

Coming back to the touchstone of the breath, we see again and again, how we trick ourselves by indulging in states, by propagating storylines. In a moment of feeling into the touchstone of the breath, attention releases fixation on usual patterns of thought and feeling. The beginnings of a

kind of spaciousness, of equanimity can be felt, a quality that is very different from the usual configurations of attention. It's so profoundly simple: feel the breath; feel into the sensations of the bodymind; open to seeing and hearing. In contrast to the usual narrow concerns of self-image, it is rather like opening all of the windows in a closed, airless room. All of a sudden and all at once, it's so easy to simply enjoy the intimacy of breathing this breath within the vast, open space of experiencing.

With this breath, enter into the space of maitri.

## The Touchstone 12: The Practice of Taking Care

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, November 22nd, 2014

Our practice of the Way of the Buddhas is practised with and through the whole bodymind. Dogen zenji called this "shinjin gakudo, "studying the Way with the bodymind."

How your mind is at any moment is expressed in your posture, in your actions, in how you are with others, and the space in which you allow them to be as they are. And it's also expressed through the spaces in which you live and work.

We tend to think about things as being solid and somehow already complete, when in fact everything is always in process. Your life is made up of a vast array of details that keep shifting and changing. But people often talk about their lives as being almost entirely made up of their job and social life.

Joshu Dainen zenji often said, Be joyful and be careful. In our practice Teachers might often talk about the importance of "taking care."

When a sitting round ends, our practice does not end. Bowing with the breath, we straighten, mindfully move from zazen posture to seiza on the zabuton and then mindfully take care of the zafu and zabuton. Each press on the zafu is a touchstone of reality. Each sensation of the knees and shins and feet on the mat, each sensation of clothing on the skin, the air on our faces and hands are touchstones of reality. And in standing, the standing is our practice. Hearing the kaishaku strike is the sound of reality. Taking a step is reality taking a step. This is how we take care and how we can understand realize the "joy" that Joshu Dainen roshi was speaking of, how we can "enjoy ourselves" in jijuyu-zanmai as Anzan roshi invites us to.

But it has been clearer and clearer to me that students often misunderstand this. Instead of it being understood as something that we can do, as part of our practice, it is understood as just more of self-image's usual turning around in what Dogen zenji called the "closed circles of self-concern."

"Taking care" of oneself, taking care of our surroundings, taking care with the people we interact with, is not about having a feeling about any of those details. It is in how we work with the details. Taking care of yourself is seeing what is needed with a wide view. It's doing what needs to be done now, with an eye to how that will affect us later. Cleaning up your space is an act of compassion towards yourself because if you clean up the space you will come back to a nice clean space. That is what you will meet later. Setting up a pot of coffee for when you get up in the morning is an act of compassion towards yourself because then it's all taken care of for the you - as you will be then - who will have a much easier time because all that you will have to do is press the button to turn it on. Whew. Good morning! Thanks! And the same applies to cleaning the dishes in the sink so you won't have to do that later, or hanging your keys on a hook so you always know where to find them. And then building on these little actions of clarifying how you do what you do so that things become easier and easier and easier.

But these acts of compassion are often not convenient. You have to make an effort to take care of things and that won't necessarily be easy. We all know, for example, that taking care of a baby is important, but it is not easy. Getting up, night after night, in the middle of the night to tend to a crying baby is not convenient and it's not particularly easy. You don't do it because you feel motherly or fatherly or because it's fun. And it often is the last thing on earth you want to do. But it is part of taking care, an act of compassion, and it is a necessity. And although it is quite a bit easier, so is cleaning the kitchen, even though you don't feel like doing it.

When you look at the space in which you live and the objects you have within that space and how you have them arranged, what you are seeing is your mind. If you allow things to pile up and fall over, you're doing this with your mind. You're not seeing what is right in front of you or what it is telling you. Well, until you trip over it. In which case it's telling you you've forgotten you have feet and feet need a clear space to walk through.

If you want to clarify your life, you need to start with these details: Food, clothing, shelter. Eat well. Everything you do you do with the bodymind. No bodymind, no you. And the bodymind needs the energy from food to do what it does. If you are busy in areas of your life and don't eat, you're neglecting the bodymind. You're not a floating head, operating independently of the rest of the body. If you don't eat properly you will get sick. Or crazy. Or both. Because states of mind are not separate from states of body. Starve the body and you are starving the mind.

Sometimes people think that "taking care" of themselves means going to see more movies. Or hanging out with friends more. Or having different kinds of friends. No, "taking care" of yourself starts with the business of feeding, clothing and sheltering the bodymind. The movies and the

friends and whatnot are activities you might or might not engage in, but the staples, the most important things, the things that you depend on for life, these involve first and foremost, taking care of food, clothing and shelter.

You need adequate clothing to protect the bodymind and you need to look after your clothing. By adequate clothing I mean warm clothing for the winter. If your winter coat is not warm enough, go get a warm coat. If it doesn't fit you anymore and you can't zip it up, go get a bigger coat. But take care of the bodymind by clothing it properly. Hang your clothes up properly. Don't just drop them on the floor mixing clean clothing with dirty, because again, this is reflecting the state of your mind. Live with a quality of dignity. Create a place to put dirty laundry and keep it separate from the clean. If you tell yourself you're just messy but that's okay because you've been messy ever since you were a teenager, take a look at that attitude. You're not a teenager anymore. And the fact that you had this or that habit as a teenager is no justification for continuing it now.

It might seem a bit odd to some of you that I am talking about this. But it is important and the level of confusion that people are experiencing these days compels me to explain it. So even if you think you already understand it all. Listen. Listen carefully. Because even if you think you already understand this, there is a good chance you know one or more people who actually do not and they will be experiencing a kind of suffering because of it. And I will also point out that what I am saying actually does apply to everyone no matter how well we might think we have everything arranged, because we are never finished. All of us are "in process" and everything could always be better, more open, clearer.

If you start with small things and are sure to do small tasks every day to keep things from piling up and falling over, the changes that comes about in your life, as your life, can be very powerful. You begin to care about yourself and through that, you begin to care about other people in a different way. You understand more clearly the challenges they face in what they need to do. You understand more about the effort it takes to establish a nice space and maintain it. And you begin to take interest in and responsibility for your own space and how you interact with it. It becomes interesting. Very interesting. Because the space is continuously giving you feedback about how you are and you can learn from it.

But again, this is not about having a feeling. It's not about doing a big-burst white tornado thing and cleaning all the things! Today! Now! And then collapsing and not bothering with it any further. Don't make it into a great monumental task. It's about learning to take care of things, learning to work in a methodical, measured way that is sustainable. The big burst white tornado approach is a state that burns very brightly while it burns, but once it has burnt out, you're back to square one. And if you tend to take that approach to organizing or cleaning your living space you will also tend to take that approach in the work you do. In your work or in your home, letting things pile up until they pretty much fall over and then rushing around to catch up - alternating between not caring at all and trying to fix it all at once - is exhausting and completely unnecessary.

Your life is an ongoing process. Situations come and go; people come and go; circumstances change. But through all of this you're learning and part of what you are learning is how to adapt and apply skillful means to the situation as it is now; how to organize things now and make the best possible use of what you have and what is available to you. The smallest details matter. Changing the broken shoelace for a new one is being able to tie your shoe properly. That is helpful and every little bit helps because it is the sum total of all those little bits that make up your life.

If you want a rich, strong life, and good relationships with others, it starts with having a good relationship with yourself and how you are about yourself and with yourself and the space around you. If you're not responding to your environment, if you're not interested in it, it is because your attention has become so inverted you've cut yourself off from it. And if that's the case, how are you going to know how to respond to other people in a way that is appropriate and enlivening? Practise responding. Respond to the dirty cup on the counter. Respond to the cat who is asking to be fed. Respond to the smell of the litter box and the garbage pail that needs to be emptied. Respond to the laundry that needs to be done. Respond to the bill that needs to be paid and the friend who is waiting for an answer to an email. Respond to the gnawing feeling of hunger in your belly by preparing a nutritious meal or stop somewhere for a bite to eat. Cut through the passivity and respond and life will respond to you. The bodymind needs to be allowed to open to the world in which it arises and states that seem to justify not opening tie a tourniquet around your life.

It's that time of year again. Ho ho ho. Christmas trees and wrapping paper. And in the midst of that, there are people thinking about committing suicide. I find even the thought of that painful, but it is true. And beyond and all around the wrapping paper and tinsel and the disappointments people experience in their lives, there are infinite possibilities. Anything you experience can be interpreted in countless different ways. Don't buy into any of them. Let the process of life continue to unfold and let's see who and what we all are.

The posture of zazen is very simple and very clear. The point of the posture is to sit in the reality of this moment. The posture points to the open space of reality all around and within and as the bodymind. But this is also true when you are not sitting zazen. It's true when you are walking down the street or sitting on the couch. It's true even when you are sleeping.

If you habitually slouch because you can't be bothered to sit up straight, you're allowing attention to lean into a state. If attention folds down or becomes narrowed and congealed, the bodymind will begin to slouch or tighten. And you can notice this and in the noticing of it, choose to do something about it.

There's up and there's down. Down is allowing attention to fold in on itself, to become passive. There are degrees of this, of course, but at its more extreme, people stop caring. About anything. Including themselves. But this occurs through a process of making compromises - one small compromise after another. We all tend to do this but when people are experiencing more extreme states, it's more obvious.

Everything you do matters. Everything you do affects someone or something else, outside of you.

You might think "well this doesn't apply to me, because I'm highly functional, and I'm good at my job". But that isn't enough if there are areas of your life that you're not taking care of. The whole picture must include you in the picture. If you leave you out of the picture, you're not working with reality because you ARE part of reality.

Eating well, taking care of the space you live in, staying on top of your bills and dentist appointments and so forth are all very, very, important because these affect the whole bodymind and everything you do you do with the bodymind.

If your house or your living room, or your bedroom is in a mess, what you are seeing when you look at that mess is your own mind. You don't stop at the end of your nose. The world doesn't begin at the end of your nose. You and world arise together. You can't pretend you are not part of it. You can't hide from it. You and everything else you are experiencing arise together and at the same time, and there is no separation between them. So if you drop your clothing on the floor and leave the sink full of dishes you are displaying your mind. The mess is you. So you can't get off the hook by saying "well, I'm very together in this area and so that area doesn't count". There aren't two of you. There is just one body and one mind and everything you do is done by this one bodymind.

Dongshan Liangjie daiosho said, I just want to be one whole body. The Sutra Master Sengzhao said, Heaven, earth, and I have one root. All things and I are one body. Shitou Xiqian daiosho was inspired by this to compose the Sandokai: Meeting of Ultimate and Relative. Practising this single and whole bodymind wholly and completely in each moment and situation is the touchstone that allows us to contact, to meet, and then realize what the Buddhas and the Awakened Ancestors have realized.

So have a good morning and take care of yourselves.

The Touchstone 13: Living in the Space of Maitri

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, March 30th, 2015

We have passed the time when the calendar says that it is spring. But we know it is not yet anything that we can really call spring. The trees are still bare and their dark branches stand out

against the blue of the sky. Sometimes early in the morning or at sunset, the light paints them in shades of gold and brown, but most of the time they appear to be very dark, almost black, starkly contrasting with the blue of the sky which appears between the branches. If you look at them in a particular way, it is as if the sky were caught between their branches. But of course if you widen your view, you can see that the trees are not holding the sky in their branches. The sky opens all around them, in front of them and behind, and they arise in the sky within the whole of the sky. The vastness of the sky extends up and all around, and all the way down to the ground. If you widen your view and your understanding further then you realize that the sky and the branches are not separate. The sky, the branches, the clouds, the buildings, the people, your hands and feet are not separate. They all arise within your seeing, your experiencing.

A shift in perception like that can be quite a strong experience. But even the strongest of experiences can last for only a brief moment. Then they are just forgotten or are just assimilated and become part of the way we understand things, so they no longer stand out. And if you don't remember to practise with such experiences and then continue to practise during the time following them, they will tend to dissipate altogether.

Sometimes students will have moments of a more open understanding in their practice, and they will tell me about these with enthusiasm during daisan. But sometimes only a few weeks or months later, and sometimes even days later, they are seated opposite me, telling me that they can't really remember why they started practising; how their practice hasn't changed and they're not getting anything out of it. Usually when this happens the thing that they fail to notice, the most obvious thing, is how they are when they are speaking about this. They fail to recognize how contracted they are.

The problem with contraction is that it is so habitual that we just don't notice how contracted we are. It's perhaps a bit like not recognizing you have an accent. Everyone else might notice it, but you don't because you always sound the same to you. But the contraction is there and the effects are -- well, perhaps one could say -- cumulative.

Before you started sitting your thoughts seemed to you to be a kind of continuous streaming that always made sense to you. But when you sit zazen, it is immediately apparent that they are actually a jumble of "stuff". Something can seem a really fantastic thing to think about and a moment later you cannot even remember what it was. And that is what is really fantastic: that we do not remember that! Within a half-hour of sitting, thousands of different strings and fragments of words and images rise and fall.

Self-image binds it all together to create that illusion of it being a continuous streaming by ignoring the fragmentation and contradictions that are actually occurring. You can't help but see this through sitting zazen. But you forget it. And how important that understanding is.

An alcoholic who stops drinking knows he or she cannot drink without disastrous effects, and yet,

they can trick themselves into thinking it's okay to have a drink and then another, and another. Self-image, which is itself contraction, wants to hide. It doesn't want to be exposed for what it is -- which is essentially a fabrication, a kind of ghost, made out of fear. It is that thing that derails you when you are trying to do something of benefit for yourself or others, that convinces you that nothing is really worthwhile, that it's really all quite meaningless and there is no point in making an effort. It's a bully that doesn't really care about you or anyone else. It slowly dries you out, dries out heart and mind, and it will have ten thousand ways of justifying why that's the right way to go. It's not. It's the wrong way to go.

If you don't practise really being a human being, you won't be a human being, not in the full sense of the term. And this is why we begin our practice by opening to the details that are most essential to the reality of our existence. We practise opening to the sensations of the breath, as a touchstone, the sensations of the tanden, the rest of bodily sensation; to seeing; to hearing, and we spend a long time just learning to let ourselves be honest about those. But that's just the beginning. Mindfulness is an essential practice, but it is called "basic mindfulness" because it is basic to other aspects of Zen practice that you might eventually do. And in fact everything else, such as the Bodhisattva Precepts, koan practice and study, and all of those other things are a deepening and widening of mindfulness.

An aspect of this deepening is what we call maitri or "a quality of friendliness towards self and other". The space of maitri is not a realm or a place. It is every realm, every place. It is living with choice and the only choice that really is a choice is the choice to open. Having an open heart is not trying to do something or be a certain way. It is simply opening to the vastness of our lives, not holding oneself separate from experiencing. An open heart just observes, straightforwardly and honestly. And when this begins to happen, we experience a kind of spaciousness and generosity, a basic quality of friendliness towards ourselves and towards those around us. We realize this is something we can choose to open to, moment-by-moment. This is beginning to live in the space of maitri.

We need to take care in our lives, and in our interactions with others. It's so easy to contract and when we contract attention narrows and congeals. Because of this we will tend to miss most of the detail of what we are experiencing and this makes it very easy to take the worst possible view of whatever is going on. Which is precisely what people tend to do much of the time. This is when we are at our least human. If there is something going on that we don't like, we will tend to believe it's because it's deliberate. Someone is choosing to make us feel small and victimized. The situation was set up to make us feel this way. They're plotting and they're out to get us.

So much time and energy is consumed by contracting attention into storylines about what other people are doing or might be doing and reacting to those -- worrying about how I am or how I should be and how they are and how they should be and on and on and on. And if any of this is acted out, it affects everyone around us. If they are acting it out too, the propagating spreads like wildfire. If you take just a moment to really look at this, there is a question that really does need to

be asked: Why would you do this to yourself? Set aside for a moment what other people might really be doing or how they're behaving, or the grappling to uncover "the truth" of the situation -- why would you choose to see yourself in that light? And isn't it obvious that if you don't see yourself in that light, then there's no need to struggle to prop yourself up or fight against anything because everything is alright and has been all right all along. If other people are into a tizzy about something, why should you allow that to cause you to feel poverty-stricken?

What if we just stopped all of this pushing and pulling and struggling and flailing about? What if we recognized that contraction is contraction. It doesn't matter whether it's your contraction or my contraction. It doesn't matter where it started or why or who started it or when. If you are experiencing contraction, it's yours to practise with. What if we decided to just do that - to take responsibility for what is going on and practise with contraction simply because it's there and we recognize it to be contracted and open all around it? This would be practising the first of the paramitas, dana paramita.

We really can't discuss maitri (friendliness towards self and others) or karuna (compassion or the activity of wisdom) without looking into the six paramitas, or as they are known in Japanese, the ropparamitsu. These are:

Dana Paramita

: generosity or recognizing the fundamental richness of experience

Sila Paramita

: integrity or living with not-knowing

Ksanti Paramita

: patience or the flexibility of not jumping to conclusions

Virya Paramita

: energy or the limitless uncontrived exertion of experiences

Dhyana Paramita

: the practice of inherent freedom through continuous questioning

Prajna Paramita

: perfect knowing or Awake Awareness becoming itself as it is.

I'm not going to go into these in-depth today because there isn't time, but they are essential to maitri and karuna. They're essential to the whole of our practice. And although it might seem that because there are six paramitas spoken of, that these represent some sort of progression, there really isn't a progression from one 'stage' to another 'stage'. Each is an aspect of the whole and all are necessary for complete understanding.

Situations continuously arise in our lives that we need to respond to. But if we do this with the sort of strategies self-image will come up with, we're not really responding. Instead, we're propping up the sense of "self" and "other". We think we have to "deal" with the situation, that it has everything to do with what we already assume it to be. And when we do this we completely miss the process that is going on, the interaction between subject and object. We don't see how judgmental we become -- towards others and towards ourselves -- or the effect this can have until it becomes glaringly obvious.

To practice living in the space of maitri we first need to recognize the need to open. It doesn't matter what is going on, that comes first. And then we need to apply skillful means. To do that, there are four areas we need to look into: person, place, time and amount. Who is it? Where are they? What sort of situation is it? Is it the right time, is it appropriate now, and how much?

Whatever the topic is, will what you have to say about it be understood, or will it fall on deaf ears? Will it cause offence, thus distorting the point that you would like to make? If so, why bother? If you decide it's worthwhile to say something, then you need to speak clearly and observe how what you are saying is being received. Are you saying too much? Too little? Is this an appropriate setting for this conversation? If you are trying to have a fairly private conversation with someone in the middle of the cash line at the supermarket, that's obviously not going to work too well. How much time do you have for this conversation? How much time does the other person have? Is this too complex a topic to go into in the amount of time available? If so don't go into it until there is enough time. And as to amount - can you say everything you intend to say all at once? Will it be too much for the other person to absorb? Is what you're saying to the point or are you dragging all kinds of associations into it that might be meaningful to you but mean nothing to the other person? There's a lot to look into with this because, let's face it, the point of communication is to communicate, to make something clear FOR the other person, not to just talk to yourself out loud.

Beginning to take responsibility for contraction - your own and other people's is not a matter of cultivating warm, fuzzy feelings of compassion for the "human condition".

In the Dharma Talk, Compassion is the Activity of Wisdom, Anzan Hoshin roshi says,

To practice compassion we must have a tender heart, an open heart. We must have removed many layers of armour, but also of skin. We must have peeled ourselves away so thoroughly that we are not only transparent to our experience and to each other, but we are completely intimate. So that when Zhang drinks sake, Lee gets drunk; when Lee drinks sake, Zhang gets drunk.

A compassion that does not spring forth from insight, from wisdom, is unfortunately usually an attempt to try to manipulate oneself and manipulate others so that one can arrange one's world in a way that consoles one. Either for the love that one feels that one always deserved but never had or for the sake of the power of it, the power of having people love you and depend upon you and

be grateful to you. This is very scary, very frightening.

Compassion must be manifest in the most simple actions: Listening to someone; reaching out and taking a hand; slowing your steps to keep pace with someone. All of these simple actions, moment after moment, day after day, are compassion.

But sometimes being compassionate might also require that you speak firmly to someone and they may not necessarily thank you for it. They might not like it at all. Taking a sharp knife away from a child, even though that may make them cry, is an act of compassion. But there should be no anger in what you're saying and the reasons for saying it, It's not a matter of just going along with whatever other people say or do. If someone is doing something that you can see is harmful to them, it may be better to explain to them how that activity is harmful and explain why it is in their best interest to change that rather than hold their hand while they do it. It depends on the situation. Person, place, time and amount.

You can always choose to open, no matter what is going on. The alternative is to fold down, to fall into strategies, to follow the contractions of self-image. You don't have to do that. You can feel contraction, physically, in the tightening of muscles, in the clenching of attention. You can clearly notice reactions, such as the impulse to defend yourself against perceived insult, or replay interactions over and over again in your mind as though trying to see it in minute detail so that you can figure out what you should have said or should have done.

You don't need to do that. Most of the strange and weird and unpleasant conversations you have with other people are about topics that really don't matter in the first place. And frequently there is no resolving them. They don't need to be resolved. The less entanglement you fall into, the more clearly you can see what is actually going on and how to respond to it appropriately. But if you do feel the need to respond, open first. Drop the defensiveness and anger. Come back to the breath and the sensations of the tanden, whole bodily sensation, seeing and hearing. Open to peripheral vision so that you can see the space between you and the person you're speaking to that extends all around them. Be generous. You can afford to be generous.

Practise the simplicity and honesty of opening attention to things just as they are. Release the strategies self-image entangles you in by coming back to the touchstone of the breath. Maitri must be grounded in mindfulness practice, or it can devolve into feeling-tones, strategies and stances about being "open" or "compassionate" or "caring" and that is NOT what we are talking about.

When you are speaking with someone, especially if you're in a state, bear in mind that words are not what experiences are. They can be useful in that they can point to experiences. But no matter how long you talk for or how descriptive you try to be, you can never, ever convey fully to anyone exactly how you feel about something; or what you think about it; or what it was like for you. And neither can they. Anything we experienced in the past, even if just five minutes ago, is gone. All that remains are fragments of memory. If we don't recognize that, we will tend to beat our heads

against a metaphorical brick wall trying to "share" experiences with other people, trying to get them to see our side of it.

The same is true even if you're just reading a news article about something that has happened. You might react to it this way or that, shake your head in disapproval, feel sad about it, feel indignant about it. But whatever the article says is going to leave out almost as many of the facts as it puts in and most likely many many more. Your impressions of the people or the situation the article is pointing to are not whatever that situation is. Your impressions of it are really quite a lot like cartoons about it. If, for example, you read something about Boko Haram kidnapping 500 people, however you represent that understanding to yourself is NOT what that situation is and never could be. And if you could somehow download your thoughts and feelings about it and send them to the people involved, they probably wouldn't recognize themselves at all from the descriptions you've conjured up in your mind.

Everything is like that. Even if you are speaking to your wife or your husband or your children, your friends, other family members, even teachers and practice advisors, you can only use words to point to experiences. No one can ever fully and completely understand what you have experienced. And that's fine because no experience you have had or ever will have could ever be the ultimate truth about experiencing. Experiencing is always coming and going, shifting and changing.

And that's why it really doesn't really matter what's happened in the past. Most people spend an amazing amount of time dwelling on past events which is a complete waste of time and energy. None of it has the solidity you try to attribute to it. What matters is what you do now. And the most important thing you can do is open. And then open further.

The Touchstone 14: Karuna  
presented by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
Dainen-ji, June 27th, 2015

In the previous Dharma Talk in this series of Talks, I spoke about "maitri", (Sanskrit ) which means "friendliness". The practice of maitri brings together the recognition of states of hope and fear and confusion together with mindfulness and wisdom. When we do this, there is a kind of warmth or tenderness towards ourselves and towards others. This is simply opening to the vastness of our lives, not holding oneself separate from experiencing, but allowing ourselves to experience with an open heart. An open heart just recognizes, straightforwardly and honestly. And we realize this is something we can choose to open to, moment-by-moment. This is beginning to live in the space of

maitri.

And now we can consider the maturation or ripening of maitri and so the topic is "karuna" ( ), the Sanskrit word for "compassion" used in the Buddha Dharma. As Anzan Hoshin roshi has said, compassion (or karuna) is the activity of (prajna or) wisdom. It is recognizing and thus doing what needs to be done in each moment.

It is very important that we are very clear about what we mean by "compassion" as this is widely misunderstood to be a feeling tone that one 'pumps up' in response to a situation or a person.

In the teisho, "Zhang Drinks Sake", Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi says:

Karuna is a compassion that springs directly from wisdom, from seeing the emptiness, the tracelessness, the openness, the vastness, the limitlessness of your own experience, the vastness and limitlessness and openness and tracelessness of yourself and of each other.

It is a compassion which can be very ruthless, a compassion that is choiceless. A compassion that not only does not ask for thanks in reward for its actions, not only does it not ask for thanks, it often doesn't say "please" first. It doesn't even introduce itself. It simply does what it does. Because compassion is the manifestation of wisdom, of clear seeing, of insight, of mindfulness.

A very big question that comes up for students goes something like this: "What is the relationship between mindfulness practice, the practice I do, and what is going on in the rest of my life, or the world around me? How is sitting on a cushion practising zazen related to compassion?"

Before we started sitting our thoughts seemed to us to be a kind of continuous streaming that seemed to make sense to us. But when we sit zazen, it is immediately apparent that they are actually a jumble of "stuff". Before we started sitting we believed that to be aware of something we must have thoughts and feelings about it. And that we were the thoughts and feelings. Of course, this makes no sense because the thoughts and feelings arise within awareness of them. Thoughts and feelings don't mean anything more about our experience than does the fact that the bird song is sweet or the passing dump truck is loud and not really pleasant. Thoughts and feelings are part of what awareness does, but awareness also presents itself in many different ways. Self-image is the presumption that awareness must be aware of something and that there must be something that is aware.

When we sit zazen, it is so easy to see that although thoughts and feelings might be present we are aware in all kinds of ways that have nothing at all to do with thinking and feeling. We can see how attention moves towards a thought or a feeling or a sound, an itch, an ache, a fly on the wall. We can observe how attention contracts, how it folds down, and how it can open up if we stop either trying to avoid what we are experiencing or stop habitually identifying with a feeling, a

thought, a view, a strategy.

The path never ends. It begins again and again in each moment, and begins in this moment of being aware. It is only when we cannot observe experiencing openly that it becomes a contraction. We begin afresh in each moment of sitting zazen, by opening to the sensations of the bodymind sitting; by opening to seeing and hearing. and in doing this we are engaging in the moment-to-moment practise of the Four Great Vows.

Yasuda Joshu Dainen roshi used to say that, Zen is the Four Great Vows with arms and legs and eyes and ears. In other words, it is about living the Four Great Vows with the whole body in your actual life. To live the Four Great Vows with the whole bodymind in your actual life, you need to be able to open attention past habitual thoughts and feelings and storylines and reactivity in order to truly feel, to see, to hear, to smell and taste and touch and think and feel clearly. That is what you are practising when you practise mindfulness, which is the foundation of practice. And other practices can follow as our practice deepens. All of the practices we do which are part of the continuum of training within Zen practice, are about fulfilling the Four Great Vows. Your practice of mindfulness springs from The Four Great Vows and is part of how you work towards the fulfillment of them.

We live in strange times; very strange times.

Increasingly we are seeing reputable, peer reviewed studies that indicate that the earth's sixth mass extinction is already underway. One says that unless policies change, society will collapse by 2040 due to catastrophic food shortages. This is very scary stuff and it's not going to go away. So what about all of that? What does that have to do with your practice? What about the rest of the world and all of the difficulties and suffering that people experience, that sometimes you or the people who are close to you experience? What about the vast suffering that will inevitably come about through climate change?

What can you do about this? What can anyone do about this?

Back to the Four Great Vows, but this time I will read a quote from another student of our grandfather in Dharma, Joshu Dainen roshi. The student's name is Endon and he trained under Joshu Dainen roshi at Hakukaze-ji, when Anzan Hoshin roshi was also there. Endon said:

People really need to realize how bad the situation really is. Even so, though there's not much anyone can do we should do what we can. My late Zen master Yasuda Joshu roshi used to say, "It's no use, these Four Great Vows. But you must mean them when you chant them. Knowing there is no use. It is thinking the world is just stuff you can use that is the problem. So, although they are useless, the Four Great Vows have the highest use. But only if we know they are useless. Being human, being Buddhas, what else can we do but work for the best?"

Now I think this is very important, because it clearly conveys that chanting the Four Great Vows is not going to save anyone from anything. They're not a magic incantation that's going to make a benevolent "Buddha" smile down upon us and protect us and make it all alright. That's not why we chant them. But they are rather like a summary of our practice - whether one is practising mindfulness as a beginning student or doing more advanced practices as a monastic. They are a reminder that we expose ourselves to regularly, that our practice is NOT just about us, it is about all beings. They remind us that we can be of no use to beings if our attention is clouded with obsessions; that we can and MUST practise in each and every moment; that right now matters; and that we must make the commitment to do our best equally in our practice and in our lives; that we must be living the Four Great Vows with the whole bodymind, in our actual lives, living the Four Great Vows with arms and legs and eyes and ears.

It's so easy and so habitual to contract, to fold attention down into negative patterns of attention. Finding new ways of responding to the questions about our lives that present themselves -- from the very smallest of details to the really big, complicated questions -- requires that first and foremost we make the effort to open attention past habitual patterns of thought and feeling. Otherwise we just go in circles. As Anzan Hoshin roshi said to me long ago, You nail your foot to floor and turn in circles and think you're seeing the world. You need to pull out the nail and move freely to see beyond self-concern and see what is going on.

As Joshu Dainen roshi said, It is thinking the world is just stuff you can use that is the problem. He said this long before anyone spoke about climate change or mass extinction because this has always been the problem. It is the root cause of ALL of the problems we have created that have caused such vast suffering all around the world. It is the cause of genocide and war. It is the cause of poverty and starvation. It is the reason global economies are in ruins. The world is not just stuff we can use, and we really need to do something about this sense of entitlement generated by self-image. Make choices with open attention, choices that make sense instead of continuously trying to prop up the sense of self that is 'this' or 'that', that always needs more to puff itself up.

A student wrote to Anzan Hoshin roshi about questions that he had following the falling of the Two Towers in New York City on September 11th, 2001. This correspondence was published on the internet as "No Consolation". In this, the Roshi said:

People who make money by buying and selling money move their money here and there and industries and nations and people lose money because of it; people can no longer buy rice to make gruel for their babies. This too is very real. There is also every likelihood that no matter what anyone does now, unless everyone everywhere changes everything that they do about everything (and most of us also just vanish magically from the earth without leaving the plagues and pollution that would result from so many human bodies), all wildlife on the planet will be extinct within twenty years or so except what can live in cities and between the ploughed rows of fields such as raccoons, crows, and so on. This too is very real. And it gets worse because the list goes on.

None of this can be remedied, no matter the depths of rage and anguish and horror and sadness we might feel. You cannot fix it. I cannot fix it. We can try not to break it further. But in any case, life will go on, as it does, doing what it does: birth, eating, shitting, death. This is a very beautiful world, but it is not a safe place. It is not fair. It is not nice. And yet the nature of all beings and of each being is, and always has been, and always will be limitless luminosity, beyond birth and death and all conditions. Realizing this freedom, embodying this, and making it available to others in every way that we can is the only thing worth doing at all. This has nothing to do with trying to make the world safe or wishing it was nice. It has to do with the continuous practice of radical questioning and the dynamic activity of releasing. So I cannot help you with your sadness except to say: Feel sad, if sadness is present. A broken heart is a reasonable thing in this world. But do not become the sadness but do not avoid it. Feel the hands, feel the feet, keep the peripheral vision open. Don't talk to yourself. Don't vent to others and encourage them to vent. If you are watching the news on TV, practise. If you are speaking, practise. If you are listening, practise. And follow the instructions you have been given. Sit when you can, as often as you can. From everything that I know and what all of the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors have known, this is the most and in fact the only important or useful thing you can ever really do: practise the Way. This is the only light and wisdom I have to offer. It is not consoling but I think you do not really want merely to be consoled.

What you are seeing when you are sitting is how your attention moves; how it folds down, how it opens up; how it falls into habitual patterns of thought and feeling; how convinced you are by thoughts and feelings. And all of these details you are seeing are made up of the same movements of attention with which you do absolutely everything that you do. If attention is habitually contracted, that is how it will be when you get up in the morning, when you go to work, when you interact with coworkers, with your family, and when you make decisions.

We don't know what effect our practice will have on our lives or on the lives of others because that changes all the time. This is why everything we do matters. When you take a step in kinhin, it matters. When you hang your coat up, it matters. When you take care of something instead of leaving it for someone else, it matters. And what you are doing right now, sitting here feeling the breath, the sensations of the body, opening to seeing and hearing, it matters. Because all we have is right now, right here. The past is gone; the future hasn't happened. There is only now. There is only this and this is as good as it gets.

I think we would like to have a formula, something that tells us how to be compassionate in this or that situation so that all we need to do is remember the formula and we'll know what to do to be compassionate and other people will recognize our actions as 'compassionate'.

But reality has no formulas. We can devise formulas that describe aspects of reality such as chemical reactions or wave functions or particle and field actions. Mass, velocity, and other

abstractions. But in our real lives, you can never predict how anything we say or do will be received or interpreted or what effects this will have. For example, I say this with deep compassion for you but you might think I am hectoring and wagging my finger at you. But as a Teacher of the Dharma I can only do my best to express what I know must be said.

And so just as reality is not a concoction of formulas, in our practice, there is no formula. But there is a touchstone: Are you open to your experience or are you contracted? Is it open, or is it closed? Are we open with the whole bodymind to the whole field of present experience? Or are we in recoil from it, crouched behind a contraction of thoughts and feeling-tones? So the touchstone is: If it is closed, then open. If it is open, open further. There is just this moment-to-moment practice of being alive to our lives, of choosing to open so that whatever the circumstances, whatever happens, we are already making that choice. And because we are making that choice, how we respond will be from the best we have to offer.

The Touchstone 15: Ceaseless Activity  
presented by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
Dainen-ji, August 22nd, 2015

In the previous Dharma Talk in this series of Talks, I spoke a little about "karuna" ( ), the Sanskrit word for "compassion" used in the Buddha Dharma. And as concepts about "compassion" are, in my view, fraught with so many misunderstandings, we will look into this further today.

Compassion is not a feeling tone. It's not about how you feel about other people or about yourself. It is an activity. And in Buddhist iconography we have a wonderful depiction of this ceaseless activity in the form of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara.

Anzan Hoshin roshi tells an updated version of the legend of Avalokitesvara vowing before Buddha Amitabha that he would never attain enlightenment until and unless all sentient beings attained enlightenment. And so he worked, tirelessly, unceasingly, until one day he went to Amitabha Buddha and said "There, I'm finished" and Amitabha Buddha said "Good, good, O son of noble family. But you've only been looking in one direction." And he moved Avalokitesvara's head slightly. Then he saw numberless beings stretching to infinity in all directions, still bound by their delusions and suffering dukkha, waiting for instruction. At this moment, the Roshi says, it was like a cartoon character being shocked and their eyes popping out of their heads. Except that Avalokitesvara's head exploded into eleven heads that could see into all of the ten directions -- at once and more -- just in case. And from his sides exploded a thousand arms, each hand holding a different tool: pots and pans, a saw, a broom, a needle, a bag of birdseed, a bandage, a zafu, a

scrub brush, a serving tray, a fountain pen, a hansaku, a watering can -- whatever is needed for the situation.

The term "bodhisattva" is commonly translated as "wisdom being", with "wisdom" meaning realization of sunyata, the emptiness or Openness of all things. Avalokitesvara bodhisattva is one amongst many legendary figures that are symbols for different aspects of Awakened activity, of how someone who has woken up from the delusion self-image lives. Anzan roshi points to how a bodhisattva is not really a noun but a verb, a description of activity, by translating bodhisattva as "being open to Openness."

Compassion is being ready to work with whatever situation arises. You're not 'trying' to get ready to be compassionate, you're just working with what's actually going on, and moment to moment that changes. If your attention becomes invested in a feeling tone "about" compassion, then what happens is that you're reducing reality to an image of what you think is going on that seems to fit the feeling tone. You cannot see clearly what is in front of you because you are too busy looking at yourself and your feeling tone. In one teisho Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi likened this kind of self-absorption to walking about holding a hand mirror up so that you can constantly look at yourself. Makes it very difficult to get in and out of cars.

The contraction of attention into a sense of self is what distorts our understanding of what it is to be compassionate and prevents us from seeing the never-ending opportunities to practise compassion in each moment. Compassion springs from the ceaseless activity of opening to reality, of being available to reality. Opening attention is, itself, an act of compassion towards oneself and others because the only other alternative is to contract. Contraction leads to further contraction and that's how things tend to go sideways in the first place. Contraction creates complexity and that in turn makes everything more difficult for everyone. So if you don't contract, you're saving everyone else a great deal of trouble.

There is no self that stands apart and separate from anything else. Each thing is made what it is by everything else and each thing is what it is because it is an experience. Anything else we might think it is, is simply a thought. Forms do not possess a self.

If you look at the wall or your zafu or the floor, none of those forms possess a self. And if you look at another person, you might like or dislike them, but who and what they are has nothing to do with your feeling about them. They stand apart from your feelings about them. But if what they mean to you is tied up with your feeling of like or dislike about them, then that feeling tone and texture become how you will interpret experiencing. And this will happen to the point that when you are identified within a texture, then within the thoughts and the categories of like and dislike you have assigned them to, there is little room for anything else. That texture and that feeling tone is all that you will allow yourself to notice. And SO much of your attention can become invested in your liking or disliking of a person ( it could also be a situation), that in addition to limiting their meaning in terms of whether you like them or don't, you're not feeling your breath or your hands and feet;

you're not seeing other colours and forms that stand out vividly in the space around you, and you don't hear the sounds. Everything becomes limited because you are allowing this texture and feeling tone to colour and condition how you are experiencing experience at that moment. And since this is contracted, how you experience experience is contracted.

And I will stress here that a feeling tone about liking another person is often just as contracted as a feeling tone of disliking them is. Because both are constructs. You've invented them and they really have nothing at all to do with that person. But if we attend to these categories of like and dislike that we assign to people, we can see past them. It is just our category for them and there is so much more going on than just that feeling of like or dislike. We can see their facial expression, the colour of their eyes, their clothing; we can see them as a whole person together with the space all around them. When we open our eyes and look, we see that there is actually someone facing us and we need to meet them as they are. We can see that they and the space around them arise together as bodymind and walls and floor and ceiling and the rest of the objects in the room and all of these arise together with the sensation of our own breath and our eyes seeing and our ears hearing and there is no separation between any of this. Yet at the same time, each detail that is noticed stands out distinctly and independently of each other. Each of these are part of how experience is presenting itself. Each detail is what it is and is also intimately part of everything else. Each dharma interpenetrates every other dharma.

Compassion is a ceaseless activity that springs from opening to Openness. It isn't something we need to 'try' to do because if we practise opening attention to things as they actually are, we find that we are available to help in whatever way is needed -- simply because it's needed and we can see that. It isn't necessary to have a feeling tone about what we are doing or why we are doing it in order to act. And if a feeling tone or a thought does come up about what we're doing or why we're doing it, that is simply recognized as a feeling tone or a thought and is released. It is of no consequence.

People tend to think that compassion must necessarily involve feeling tones, such as being "kind" in a certain "kind" of way - a way that other people will like. So compassion is viewed as having qualities of kindness, and softness, and tenderness.

Compassion might sometimes be tender. It might mean taking another person's hand or putting an arm around them if that is what is appropriate. It might mean offering them words of reassurance if that is appropriate. Sometimes it might mean making them a sandwich. And sometimes it might mean telling them to get off the couch and go make themselves a sandwich. Or go look for a job. There's no formula -- what is appropriate will depend on the situation. And the fact that you are practising does not mean that all of your relationships will suddenly become completely smooth and effortlessly harmonious in a "let's all be happy happy" way. Why would they? You can't predict how other people will behave, how they will understand or react to anything you say or do. You cannot control causes and conditions and other people's reactions. They are going to do whatever they do regardless of how you are. But if you do have to be firm or direct with other people, you

need to first notice how your attention is and open around any anger or frustration by feeling whole bodily. Then be firm, but without anger.

All that you can do is your best and the best way to do that is to practise. Our practice is absolutely simple and absolutely practical. Practice doesn't ask you to believe in anything or to behave a certain way. It asks that you apply your practice and use it as a touchstone so that you can be honest about what you are experiencing. It asks you to open to what is most simply and directly true of your experience - that you can feel the breath; you can feel the sensations of the body; you can see and hear and taste and touch and smell and think and feel. And so can everyone else. By opening to your own sense fields, you experience a natural empathy towards all experiencing - your own and the experience of everyone and everything around you. You and everything else arise together, and at the same time, with no separation. And so you will find yourself taking care and giving care without having to think about being a kind person or being a compassionate person.

Compassion is the ceaseless activity of Openness. So now let's practise being bodhisattvas.

The Touchstone 16: Manjusri  
presented by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
Dainen-ji, November 21st, 2015

This morning we began the sitting with chanting practice, and we recited the Ten Proclamations which included the names of Bodhisattvas -- legendary figures that are symbols for different aspects of Awakened activity. The Sanskrit word "bodhisattva" is sometimes translated as "one who is unfolding wisdom" or "one who is learning wisdom".

A bodhisattva is actually not just a certain kind of person, it is an activity. In fact, Anzan Hoshin roshi points to how a bodhisattva is not really a noun but a verb, a description of activity, by translating bodhisattva as "being open to Openness." This activity has the sense of one taking a journey on the Path and there are different stages that are taught about deepening this recognition.

In the last Dharma Talk in this series I spoke for some time about the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara who, for us, represents the energy of unborn compassion, or that which hears the suffering of all beings. Today I will speak a little about Manjusri Bodhisattva, who is a traditional and fictional character, a device or symbol representing aspects of what is true about who and what we all are.

Essentially, Manjusri is a set of instructions. This is true of all of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas that appear in the Teachings of our Lineage of Dogen's Zen. That is why we make use of these mythological figures. For us, Manjusri represents the richness and freshness of Knowing expressing itself as finely detailed and nuanced and coherent knowings. Another way of expressing that might be to say that Manjusri is the brightness and freshness of open intelligence, princely, ever youthful and very precise. He is portrayed as youthful because whatever arises is always fresh and an understanding that can meet experiences clearly must be freshly renewed moment after moment.

Manjusri is reputed to be the oldest and most significant bodhisattva in Mahayana literature. He first appears in the early Mahayana sutras. Because he is associated with the Prajnaparamita sutras he symbolizes the embodiment of prajna or transcendent wisdom. In Vajrayana Buddhism, Manjusri is considered to be a fully enlightened Buddha. In the Shingon School of Buddhism, he is one of Thirteen Buddhas. He figures extensively in many esoteric texts such as the Manjusri-mulakalpa and the Manjusrinamasangiti which Anzan Hoshin roshi has translated.

He is the Bodhisattva of Wisdom. He questions directly into the nature of reality. He is depicted as a prince because he has recognized and unfolded the inherent dignity and richness of experiencing and of experiences. And he is sometimes depicted holding a sword. The two-edged sword is the sword of insight which cuts both self and other simultaneously.

His other hand holds a lotus blossom, on top of which lies the Prajnaparamita Teachings. He is sometimes shown riding on a lion, which signifies wisdom, courage and power, or sitting on a lotus pedestal which represents purity. In Chinese and Japanese Buddhist art, Manjusri's sword is sometimes replaced with a ruyi scepter or a lotus blossom with a long stem curved like a ruyi.

I will read a passage from the teisho series, The Secret Life of Manjusri, presented by Anzan Hoshin roshi, as it speaks of both Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion and Manjusri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom. It provides an example of how they are different from each other.

Manjusri appears in the 700 Line Prajnaparamita sutra, the Vimalakirti Nirdeśa sutra, and throughout the literature of the Prajnaparamita. He is ubiquitous; one encounters him everywhere. But although Manjusri is the representation, the poster boy, for Prajnaparamita, somehow he was never quite as popular as Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. Perhaps this is because with a figure such as Avalokitesvara one could at least hope for some sympathy. You could say "Avalokitesvara, I am so lonely." and Avalokitesvara would say "Oh dear, that's terrible. Oh dear. What can I do for you? Maybe I can fix you up with someone."

Manjusri, on the other hand, of course, would simply look at you and say "What's wrong with you? What is it that you believe about yourself and the world that this state makes any sense at all to you? This state is a symptom of your sickness. Face-to-face with the claustrophobia, the constipation of self-image, you want to get away from it. You want to seek comfort, but you

yourself are the cause of your own sickness. Look into this. Prajnaparamita!"

The qualities that Manjusri represents of radical questioning opening into wisdom and compassion are practised every time you really sit up straight and actually do zazen and release habitual states and storylines. There may be times when you are experiencing a lot of sinking or wandering mind, or discursiveness, but you can cut through these by coming back to the touchstone of the breath at the diaphragm and tanden, by opening attention to whole-bodily sensation, to seeing and hearing. When you use the forms to cut through sinking mind, you are using the sword of Manjusri. When you choose to release thoughts by simply not completing the sentence, you are choosing wisdom over entertainment. Each time you are able to recognize something about how your attention is arranged and choose to open it if it is closed, or open it further if it seems open to you, you are practising the wisdom of Manjusri.

I'll give you a small example of the activity of Manjusri in everyday life. I think we have all had the experience of standing in a high place, perhaps a balcony or a bridge, looking down. And because we are high off the ground, looking down, the possibility of falling might occur to us. We might back away from the edge, or grip the railing a little tighter in response to that. If the reaction to this is strong, just in the looking down, one might experience a sensation somewhat like falling. This, of course is not what's happening, yet the sensation is there. This can also happen when you look up - for example, looking up to view an interesting cloud formation. You might experience a moment of vertigo and feel as though you were about to fall up. It's a very strange sensation. But if you feel your feet on the ground, come back to the touchstone of the breath and the sensations of the bodymind, you can clarify this condition -- you know that you are not falling, that everything is alright. And so this is the wisdom sword of Manjusri cutting through delusion by opening to the details of present experience to give the sensation context.

The sharp edge of the sword of Manjusri that cuts through confusion doesn't cut one thing away from another thing. The sharp edge is all directions. It is finely detailed and nuanced and coherent knowns. In any moment that you notice how your attention is arranged into states and stances and storylines - echoing back to yourself what you already know as thoughts and feelings - and choose to open around them by opening attention to the ten directions, you are practising the wisdom of Manjusri. No thought or feeling can be what you are or what the world is. Cut through obsessive and deluded views by allowing yourself to see clearly and hear, smell taste, touch and feel the world as it actually is.

There is a text called the 700 Line Sutra attributed to Manjusri, which begins with Manjusri waking up one morning and deciding he wanted to go sit in front of the Buddha, just to be in the presence of the Buddha. Anzan Roshi tells the story in this way in a series of classes on the Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita sutra or the 8,000 Line Prajnaparamita sutra:

And so he went and sat outside the Buddha's hermitage, contemplating the Buddha and other

monks saw him and thought, "Oh, well that's a pious and good thing to do", so they all sort of grouped there and so on.

So the Buddha felt all of these people outside of his door so he just sort of peeked out and said, "What the hell are you doing? What are you doing there?"

So they said, "Well, we've come to contemplate the Buddha."

He said "Well, who actually started this? Who had the first idea for it?"

They said, "Manjusri".

He said "Oh, well that's all right then." And then he asked Manjusri what he was doing in order to point out to the rest of the Sangha the way to meet the Teacher -- and that consisted of Manjusri saying that contemplating the presence of the Buddha isn't contemplating the Buddha's body, isn't contemplating the Buddha's face or his fingers or his toes or his deeds or anything of that nature but simply what the Buddha is and that the Buddha's body and form and so on is simply the presencing of those Teachings. So then if one looks at, if one understands the Dharma, then one meets the Buddha; if one meets the Buddha, one meets the Dharma.

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The wisdom of Manjusri cuts through the distortion created by the imaginary concepts about "I" or "mine", of "self" and "other". As Anzan Hoshin roshi says in the teisho series, *The Secret Life of Manjusri*:

Whenever anyone attempts to turn the process of realized practice, of embodying what is true about who and what we are into merely another set of stances, another set of doctrines, Manjusri will not be far behind twirling that sword of his over his head.

We experience a world of 'things' when our attention becomes narrowed and compressed and it can seem to us as though we don't have time to meet the moment as it is. But the practice of mindfulness, the forms, listening to teisho, our interactions with Dharma Teachers and practice advisors, shows us how to stop rushing past our experience.

The two-edged sword of Manjusri is the rising and falling of each moment and all of the details that present themselves in each moment present the Teachings of the Prajnaparamita sutras. That which is represented by Manjusri is present as this body and mind, as this moment.

Being a Bodhisattva, or "one who is unfolding wisdom" is not about being 'clever' and it is important to make the distinction'. Prajna or wisdom is not a matter of accumulating

understandings. Prajna is living as that which is true. The Bodhisattva practises wisdom by paying attention openly, unfolding this further and further, This, of course, requires looking into and recognizing just what this means about you and the world without taking up a stance. If you fall into priding yourself on your cleverness, on how "open" your practice is, and so on, you've truly misunderstood. If attention is modified in any kind of way, if any structure of mind comes up and is taken seriously, you've lost your way.

You don't need to try to be clever. You don't need to rehearse what you are going to say before coming to daisan or a practice interview. You don't need to come up with a list of clever questions scribbled on a piece of paper. Just do the practice as you have been instructed.

Manjusri is an embodied representation of the instructions. In the Sodo or Monks' Hall of traditional Soto Zen training temples the rupa on the Butsudan or platform of Awakening is Monju, which is Japanese for Manjusri. There he is represented simply as a monk practising zazen. In practising the forms, in doing zazen, in caring for each detail with open attention, we each can open to Openness as Manjusri. Manjusri is a touchstone for opening to the details and richness of expansive intelligence.

So, when you chant and hear the name Manjusri during the chants before a sitting, remember what Manjusri is there to remind you of: The wisdom of precise and vast mindfulness and insight.

The Touchstone 17: Samantabhadra  
by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
Dainen-ji, January 23rd, 2016

For as long as you are alive, the touchstone of the breath will be available to you in each moment. No matter how difficult or confusing or frightening life might seem; no matter how joyful and exciting and energetic it might seem, you are always right here, right now, and the bodymind is always breathing. There is space in your life for you to feel the touchstone of the breath and use this touchstone as a place from which you can begin to open to Openness. And when you do this, you are beginning to do the practise of the Bodhisattva. "Bodhisattva" is sometimes translated as "one who is unfolding wisdom" or "one who is learning wisdom".

Just a reminder, though, that when you hear the names of Bodhisattvas such as "Avalokitesvara" and "Manjusri" and "Samantabhadra", in a Dharma Talk or a teisho, it's important to understand that we are not referring to people. What is being spoken of, is a set of instructions. This is true of all of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas that appear in the Teachings of our Lineage of Dogen's Zen.

In the last Dharma Talk I presented, I spoke about Manjusri Bodhisattva and the teachings associated with him: how in practising the forms, in sitting zazen, in caring for each detail with open attention, we can open to Openness as Manjusri. Manjusri is a touchstone for opening to the details and richness of expansive intelligence. In today's Dharma Talk I will speak a little about Samantabhadra Bodhisattva.

"Samantabhadra" is his Sanskrit name. In Japan he is called "Fugen". In China he is known as Puxianin Tibet he is Kun-tu bzang-poin Mongol Qamugha Sainand in Vietnamese, Pho-hien

However he is known, his name has commonly been translated as "Universal Sage", or "Universal Virtue", "Universal Worthy" and "Universal Good". Another is "All Pervading Benefit." Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi has looked into the root meanings of the Sanskrit terms and the tone of the texts associated with Samantabhadra and so translated the name as "All-Pervasive Richness".

As the Roshi explains in the teisho series, Oceans of Realms, which contains Teachings on Samantabhadra:

Samantabhadra represents one who has completed the bodhisattva path. Although there are no signposts on the path itself there are various ways of speaking of it and the Indian Buddhists developed numerous sets of numbers about it. There are the six paramitas, the ten grounds, the fifty-three stages. Samantabhadra has done all of the numbers. He or she is the culmination of the path.

And yet it is said that by practising as Samantabhadra did, by making and fulfilling her vows and aspirations, even the beginning bodhisattva becomes Samantabhadra through living as All-Pervasive Richness. And so Samantabhadra represents the beginning and end of the path.

Samantabhadra is primarily associated with the Avatamsaka sutra, the Flower Garland Discourse. He is usually depicted as a youthful noble. His hands may be held palm-to-palm, or he may be holding a flower, a sutra, a jewel, or in some instances a sword. He is riding an elephant which represents sovereignty, majesty, power, grace, thoroughness, and patience. The elephant has six tusks representing the six paramitas. There is a text called The Sutra of the Practices of Samantabhadra associated with the Lotus sutra, in which the elephant has seven limbs representing the cessation of hypocrisy, lying, slander, wrong language, killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. The elephant also holds a flower in its trunk and the six tusks have six wading pools on top of them. And, according to legend, the elephant never touches the ground, but instead hovers in the air. There is a lot more about the elephant we could go into but enough about that. We have far more interesting topics to consider.

What we are concerned with today, is how the Teachings associated with Samantabhadra weave

through and are an integral part of the practice of basic mindfulness and how you can recognize and practise them more clearly.

The Roshi also said in the teisho series, Oceans of Realms:

A Teaching of the Huayan school is that the first stage of the path contains the last stage and the last stage contains the first. The beginning of the path contains the end of the path. This does not make too much sense to you when you are at the beginning of the path. When you have completed the path, it's not of much interest because it is so obvious. But after one has been practising deeply for a number of years it can be a useful point. Let me put it this way. At the beginning, you have to open up to what is in between and all around your states of contraction and tendency. The end of the path is that openness itself. All through the path of practice you are moment by moment unfolding your recognition of that openness by releasing contraction. As things seem to open more and more it can also seem that contractions are darker and tighter because you know the difference between open and closed more and more. But then you realize that what I have been telling you all along is true: that all along, it has always already been open. The more that you realize this, the more that you open to Openness and can see how you could have done that right from the beginning.

To put it into very simplified terms: When we first begin practising, our first task is to learn how to recognize and then open around states of contraction. The recognition of the suffering that comes about through contraction and making the choice to end suffering by releasing contraction could be represented by the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of compassion. It is that aspect of our true nature that has always been available to us, but has tended to be obscured by contraction, that helps us to recognize the possibility of being compassionate towards ourselves and in turn, towards those we encounter. That is the flicker of recognition and insight that prompts us to practice at all.

The precision and attention to detail required to actually practise with contraction -- that's Manjusri waving his sword over your head, insisting that you pay attention. He makes it clear to you that you cannot afford to waste time and space out. Follow the instructions, stay with basic mindfulness practice.

The Openness between and around your states of contraction, the Openness you open to -- that's Samantabhadra, "All-Pervading Richness". The practice of living as All-Pervasive Richness is opening to the transparency, expansiveness, and the Luminosity of our experience as it actually is. Samantabhadra represents the culmination of all of the realizations and practices of Avalokitesvara and Manjusri. And as our practice opens further and further, we begin to understand that the vastness and intimacy and richness of experience pervades everywhere.

In the Teisho series Oceans of Realms, the Roshi says,

Our world is a vast interweaving of realms. There is a realm of colours and forms, a realm of sounds and songs, a realm of fragrances, a realm of flavours, a realm of sensations, a realm of perceptions and cognitions.

All of the different ways in which we know - seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, thinking and feeling, provide us with different kinds of information about ourselves and the world. Although we might talk about these knowns as though they were separate, they are all aspects of the same "Knowing" (capital K "Knowing") of the Dharmadhatu or the Total Field of All Possibilities. This is why, in our practice, we must learn to open attention to all of the sense fields simultaneously instead of shuttling attention from one thing to the next to the next. Seeing occurs together with hearing, occurs along with sensations, occurs intimately with smelling and tasting. They are not separate. They don't happen sequentially. If it seems that they are sequential it is because you are only allowing attention to open to fragments of experiencing.

Self-image is convinced of and addicted to a sense of poverty. We squint at the world and our vision becomes thin and small and uncertain, clouded by storylines and states. We know we're not seeing clearly. But through sitting zazen, we learn to allow the eye gaze to fall open so that we can actually see the wall. And not only that, but we can see that the wall isn't just one colour - white - it's many shades of white and white is many colours. We can see that there is a depth of space between us and the wall and that can be seen. There is a richness and fullness and depth to seeing that is wonderful. So rich, so nuanced. And as attention continues to open, we begin to release the drone of storylines and our ears can actually hear!

I'll quote a passage about the sense field of hearing from the teisho series, The Flowering of the Senses, teisho 3. The Roshi says,

Each sound rolls within a sea of waves of sounds. Each sound has a shape, a contour. Each sound strikes the space of hearing like a match and lights up something of the qualities of that space.

Each sound shows in its presencing, in its rising which is a falling away, in its coming which is already a going, the truth of impermanence, of ungraspability, of tracelessness, of selflessness, of intimacy.

Sitting here right now, there are so many sensations that you could be noticing. You might have sat in this same room countless times before, and everything around you might seem to be as it usually is. But is it? You have never experienced this moment of experiencing before. This is ALL new. What does it feel like to be sitting here? I mean bodily? What sensations are you noticing? Your hands rest in the Dharmadhatu mudra, thumbs touching. Feel your hands. There are 48 named nerves in each hand, which includes 3 major nerves, 24 named sensory branches and 21 named muscular branches. That's a LOT of nerves and they're all working, all relaying information,

moment after moment. And that's just one range of sensation. There are others.

You might sometimes think that it's easier for you to experience the 'benefits' of practice in your informal practice. That's because things are more on your terms when you are not sitting. When you are sitting, you will often tend to get bored; you'll want to propagate storylines and states just to have something to lose yourself in. Or you'll want to try to attain some sort of 'special state' to make yourself feel better, so that you can feel as though something is happening. There's nothing in any of that. This is what happens when you allow yourself to follow that basic sense of poverty that I referred to earlier.

When you are sitting on the zafu, open attention to the richness of experiencing presented by Samantabhadra. You have never been here. You have never breathed this breath or heard these sounds or felt these sensations. The beginning and the end of the Path meet at the touchstone of this moment of this breath, so feel the breath, and use the touchstone as a place from which to open to the richness and wholeness of experiencing.

We will end for today and in the next Dharma Talk we will look into another aspect of Samantabhadra, that of Vastness.

The Touchstone 18: Vastness  
presented by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
Dainen-ji, March 26, 2016

In this series of Talks I have spoken a little about Avalokitesvara, Manjusri, and Samantabhadra and how these Bodhisattvas are touchstones that represent for us specific sets of instruction for our practice. During the previous Talk I spoke about two aspects of Samantabhadra - opportunity and richness. Today I will go into some detail about a third aspect -- Vastness.

Most of us use smartphones quite a bit and they really are astonishingly useful little devices. You might be looking down at that tiny screen - perhaps googling something or messaging with someone - and then you look up from the cluster of details you've been immersed in and all of a sudden everything is WIDE SCREEN! If you're outside, this extends as far as visibility permits, all the way down to the ground and all the way up to the sky. And the space is filled with shapes and colours and textures and sounds. And you are part of the shapes and colours and textures within the space. If you're inside a building, even in a very small room there is space all around you and the field of seeing is rich and wide.

Outside of and all around whatever attention is focussed on, the whole world presents itself as colours and forms and sounds and sensations. Whether it's your cell phone or your thoughts and feelings, whatever attention narrows and focuses on, is always occurring within a larger context.

Vastness is never hidden away or roped off from ordinary life. Ordinary life is always vast. Right now, sitting here in the Hatto, you are sitting within vastness, and you and the zafu you are sitting on are part of that vastness. But whether you experience it that way, or your attention is so compromised that it seems to be limited to the same old claustrophobic stuff you tend to experience most of the time, will depend on what you are actually doing while you are sitting on that zafu. And how willing you are to give up what you usually do. How willing you are to stop limiting yourself to usualness.

When you hear the word vastness, a range of different associations may come to mind. You might think of the vastness of space in which this tiny beautiful planet is floating. In this vast space, there is no up or down, no north or south. It is not a place, or a state of mind or a feeling about things. It is so vast that really there is nothing we can think about it that can help us in any way to really understand it. We just know that it is beyond the limits of anything we have been able to explore or understand.

But vastness doesn't just apply to how far things seem to extend away from us. Everything we experience is made up of details, including the bodymind itself, and within those details there are details. Anything you look at or see or hear or smell or touch or taste is made up of an infinite range of details and those details are enfolded within vast space and unfold as vast space in this moment. You sit here right now looking at the wall, but how are you seeing it, and what is the wall?

Here is something that Anzan Hoshin roshi had to say while commenting on Bodhidharma's Two Entries and Four Practices:

Each time that we realize that we are here, we begin to recognize an inexpressible freshness, a vividness; nothing extraordinary, but something beyond price, something beyond boundary. We begin to sense being alive. We begin to come into contact with this livingness, this being. And yet even this is not enough. We must go yet further into our own hearts, into our own minds and bodies, further into this moment, to find what this living is. Not what this living "means", but what this living is, what this wall is, what this body is, what this mind is.

Bodhidharma advises each and every one of you to practise biguan, wall-gazing, to sit like a wall, like a blank wall. Not to make your mind a blank, but to just sit with the thoroughness of a wall. A wall does not isolate itself from anything. A wall supports the ceiling. A wall extends. A wall doesn't need to move in order to be so useful. It's just [strike] there. So sit here, facing this wall, feeling this breath, hearing this sound, for the very first time, and again and again for the very first time. Sit.

This practice of zazen is beyond measure, beyond understanding, beyond concept, beyond strategy. This zazen is the manifestation of the mind of the Buddhas. Realizing this posture of zazen, this posture of body and mind, this posture of wall, of floor, this posture of Zendo, perhaps we can hear the posture of the bird's song, the presentation of bird as bird, song as song, and hearing as hearing. What is it that presents itself to us in this way? What is this presenting? Birds cry out in this warm January morning. No matter how you are this day, sit like a wall, see how you are, without reactivity, without hiding, without pretenses of holiness, or pretences of profanity. Each and every one of you thinks that you are the best and the worst here, but you're not fooling anyone. So let's stop all this and sit.

So as we sit here in the Hatto, you are seeing the wall in front of you and there are other people sitting alongside you. You can feel the sensations of the bodymind sitting, feeling the touchstone of the breath, the weight and balance of the bodymind, feeling the feet and legs, the set of the spine and head, the hands in the mudra. You can feel that there is space all around the bodymind and that there is space between you and the wall.&nbsp;

You can see the wall in front of you and you can see details to the left and right at the same time. And you can be aware of listening, not just to the sound of my voice, but to the quality of the listening, to how you are listening, how attention is. And all of this is going on at the same time, a vast richness of detail, and yet none of these details obstruct one another. Seeing does not obstruct hearing, does not obstruct feeling sensations. They all arise together as experiences within the vastness of experiencing. And if we allow each detail to stand out as what it is, just as it is, we realize we don't have to push or pull at experiencing to make some space for ourselves or any particular way of experiencing. We can just allow things to be as they are.

Each moment rises and falls as the vast intimacy of All-Pervasive Richness. Whatever you look at, whatever you touch, it arises within your experience. Experiencing has a quality of spaciousness, of vast openness. Whatever appears to be experienced is the activity of vastness arising within Knowing. Anything that you experience - a sound, a colour, another person, anything you look at, anything you touch - is arising within experience. And by thoroughly practising with this as it really is, there is room for everything. This is true for you, and it is true for everyone else and is always available. This is why this is called the Mahayana or the "Vast Path".

But we tend to shrink from the vastness of experiencing. Sometimes that shrinking takes the form of wanting to look at vastness from a certain perspective, from a vantage point. As soon as we do that, all other ways of knowing are closed off. Sometimes we're just really invested in proving to ourselves that 'something is wrong', even though that 'some thing wrong' is just a feeling of dilemma and difficulty that keeps propagating itself.

And here is something that Anzan roshi said while commenting on the Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita Sutra, the 8,000 Line Prajnaparamita Sutra. He said:

This practise is as simple as this moment. And it is as rich as this moment. In this moment, there is nothing other than just this. But "just this" is not a narrowing or flattening. It is not "merely this." This moment of Suchness is the activity of Reality, the presencing of Aware Space. The more completely that we release attention into the presencing of just this moment, the more that we begin to experience the boundlessness of experiencing. Literally, there is no boundary around experiencing. It cannot be contained. Whatever is experienced arises within it. It is only by fixating upon small clusters of experiences and turning away from the vastness of experiencing into the gestures of locatedness and directionality that boundaries occur. But all around those boundaries, the space of experiencing is still open and luminously free. Each experience points all around itself to the space of experiencing it arises within. Each way of experiencing points all around itself to the space of experiencing it arises within. Each moment points all around and all through itself to the infinite infinities of reality. Like radiance dancing on the face of waving water, colours, sounds, sensations all shimmer and leap forth and fall away as spaces moving within spaces.

Now, when you are sitting, you do not need to think about vastness, or try to feel vastness, or try to conjure up a notion of vastness. The idea of vastness can never get a hold on the fact of vastness. All that you need to do is to pay attention to the details of things as they actually are, and the space that they arise within, and allow your practice to unfold. This is "opening to Openness", this what being a bodhisattva is.

So, being a bodhisattva is what practising zazen truly is. When we sit up straight with the body and mind open to each other and as each other, we can open to the whole moment. When we stand up, step forth, pick up and put down, talk and hear, with the whole bodymind with open attention to the space of experience, the touchstone of Samantabhadra bodhisattva mahasattva invites us to go yet further into the openness of reality.

The Touchstone 19: Fudo Myo-o Part 1  
presented by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
Dainen-ji, August 27th, 2016

In this series of Talks I have spoken a little about Avalokitesvara, Manjusri, and Samantabhadra and how these Bodhisattvas are touchstones that represent for us specific sets of instruction for our practice. Today I will touch on another set of instructions, some of which are part of the Mikkyo or "self-secret" Teachings associated with our Lineage. These are represented by a Bodhisattva who is known as "Acala Vidyaraja" in Sanskrit or &nbsp;Fudo Myo-o in Japanese. And of course

you will recognize his name as it is one of the names that appears in the "Ten Proclamations" which we chanted this morning.

In preparing for this Dharma Talk I had a look around the internet for information. What little I found bore no relationship to how we understand and use the figure of Fudo Myo-o. However Fudo Myo-o has been of great historical importance. Originating with Indian Buddhist tantra, it was brought to China and from there to Japan where many of the Vajrayana practices of the Shingon and Tendai schools involve Fudo. Eihei Dogen zenji, who is the Founding Ancestor of our Zen Lineage in Japan, was originally a Tendai monk.

The Teachings associated with Acala Vidjaraja are primarily advanced monastic practices and so there are areas of this I really can't go into. This is not because these Teachings are secrets, but because you'll do just about anything to keep them a secret, to not hear them, to not allow yourself to recognize that you already understand. But there are some aspects of Acala practice that I can go into, though this may require several Dharma Talks. We will see.

But before I begin, I must remind you again, that we are not talking about a 'person' or an 'entity'. Which is good because Fudo Myo-o is a pretty strange looking, perhaps scary to some although Anzan Hoshin roshi often refers to Acala as "goofy".

Fudo Myo-o is often depicted as male, although the categories of male or female really don't apply here. Language being what it is, insists that I choose, so I'll just switch back and forth between male and female to speak about him/her.

You will have already seen various images of Fudo Myo-o. There is one on the Butsudan in the second-floor Sensei-ryo daisan area and there is a small scroll depicting him on the wall, just inside the door. And there is another painting of Fudo Myo-o in the O-sensei-ryo on the first floor.

She is depicted as standing or seated, chained to the top of a very large rock. She is blue black in colour, and not pretty; sometimes shown as having one tooth that curves up over her upper lip and another that curves down over her lower lip, almost like boar teeth. She has a furrowed brow and an expression on her face that makes it clear she is not to be trifled with. She's very fierce. She has a braid over her left shoulder and in her left hand, she holds a mala. Her right hand holds an upraised sword. And she sits, immovable, in a sea of flames extending in all directions.

So we have a solitary figure engulfed in flames, standing on top of a huge craggy stone, and he is chained to the stone. If you are in any way thinking that this might be similar to the Christian doctrine about hell fires and brimstone, forget it. You are completely off the mark. This has nothing to do with god or heaven or hell or punishment. In fact it's the complete opposite.

The fire expresses many things.

Self-image needs to abstract itself from bodily feeling, from seeing, from hearing, it needs to fragment these in order to propagate itself. It takes the capacity to think and feel, fragments, distorts and compresses these into thoughts which occur in terms of language, imagery and feeling-tones, It superimposes this over what is seen and heard, and felt and tasted, and makes this its primary set of meanings. It's like a carbon-copy world made up of illusory images, with constructed "eyes" that seem to follow the thoughts and an internalized set of "ears" that listen to the thoughts.

To some extent we're able to recognize that this internalized "world" and all of its meanings are fabrications, and that may prompt us to want to find a way out of its stale nest of views, but unless we are really practising with that recognition, we will tend to just fabricate other kinds of states that seem to be slightly better than the habitual ones. But they are still fabrications.

We are asleep and we toss and turn in the dreams and nightmares we create and propagate. The energies of bodymind are used to feed our delusions and instead of being used to bring benefit for ourselves and those around us we create and often lose ourselves in dense states of contraction and confusion. The dynamic energies of bodymind burn brightly like flickering flames, in the sea of flames which are the blazing of each moment of present experience.

The flames surrounding Fudo Myo-o represent the dynamic activity of experiencing. Everything dances as the flames of experiencing. Each thing that is experienced, each person, each state, each situation is the dancing of the flames of experiencing, dynamic, bright, You are the dancing of the flames. All &nbsp;life on Earth, even the atoms of our bodies created in the furnace of now-long-dead stars burn brightly now as the life that lives as all lives. Each moment arises as the flickering of the flames, burns brightly and vanishes into the flames. All colours, forms, sounds, are the dynamic exertion of the flames of experiencing.

Anzan Hoshin Roshi said in the teisho, "The Fire: Acala Vidyaraja",

The world is on fire in each moment. There is the fire of passion, aggression and stupidity, whose heat drives us ahead of it. We avoid being caught directly in its flames. We avoid seeing it clearly, because we are busy being driven towards the objects of passion, aggression and stupidity. We are too busy focusing on what we are angry about to actually recognize what the anger is like and its effect upon our lives and the lives of others. We are too busy trying to attain and grasp and have the object of our desire to ever see the mind of such grasping and its pettiness. We are too driven by our stupidity, too blinded by the glare, to see how fresh, how clear each moment stands.

In the midst of these flames, standing in the heart of this moment and in the heart of all beings, from the centre of the bliss of emptiness and the release of confusion, the energy of insight arises as Fudo Myo-o, Acala Vidyaraja, the immovable and unshakeable Lord of Luminosity. This is traditionally the symbol of the mind of our Lineage of transmission. It is the Sambhogakaya form of the realization of this practice. It is the symbol of the Teachers of this Lineage. Fudo Myo-o stands

enveloped by the flames of passion, aggression and stupidity. He or she (it's hard to tell) stands chained to a stone in the midst of these flames, chained by the vows that he has made to liberate all beings who dwell in this hell realm of confusion and grasping.

The rock to which Fudo Myo-o has voluntarily chained himself represents the ground of reality. His vow is to stand immovable on the ground of reality in order to liberate beings in the midst of their various forms of contraction. The rock is reality and no matter how wildly the flames of passion, aggression and stupidity burn he has chosen to chain himself to the rock. This is why the first instruction beginning students of Zen receive is to begin to learn to open to reality, to use the touchstone of the breath as a means of distinguishing between what is true and what is false.

So now let us sit and breathe this breath in this moment.

The Touchstone 2: Countless  
by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
Dainen-ji, January 26th, 2013

Breathing in, sky becomes breath. Breathing out, breath becomes sky. The breath comes and goes; thoughts come and go; feelings come and go; countless experiences come and go. Practising the posture of zazen, feeling into the countless sensations of the whole body sitting, feeling the breath and opening to the senses, we begin to understand, to experience directly, the vastness and richness of this life.

For moments here and there.

In truth, most students are really doing this practice of opening to Openness for only a split-second here and there in the course of a half-hour sitting round. It's not that you couldn't do this more continuously, that your practice couldn't be more open and clearer, but only that habitual patterns and tendencies are strong and attention will tend to follow them. Habitual patterns of attention are rather like dry channels that have been cut into a landscape by streams of water. Just as water will follow channels in the ground, your attention will tend to fall into and follow the narrow channels of habit and tendency instead of opening to richness.

So for a moment you may be sitting zazen, and you really are feeling into the sensations of the body sitting in an aligned posture, feeling the movement of the breath at the diaphragm and tanden, feeling your hands in the mudra, your legs crossed, your backside on the zafu. Peripheral

vision is open and you are hearing whatever sounds there are that present themselves, and then a thought comes up: "I have a hole in my boot. I'm going to have to put my wet sock back on and my boot and it's going to be cold and nasty. Damn, I've got to remember to go look for new boots. I hate shopping and I don't want to spend money on boots. I'm saving for a new phone. Oooh, a shiny new phone. The breath. Right, the breath. I have to feel the breath. But oooh, that phone. No, feel the breath. Right. Breathing, breeeeeeathing....hmmm. There's a hole in my boot."

Of course, that's a very brief description of something that could come up. But sometimes these channels are cut very deeply and the compulsion to follow them is quite compelling. It could be about one's child or husband or wife, or an illness or a situation at work or financial difficulties, some past event, or what to make for supper. Thoughts and feelings come up simply because they can and they'll go on for as long as you focus on them and give them attention.

Attention can be round and wide, or it can narrow and congeal. The tendency is to focus attention and allow it to congeal into knots of contraction. These knots can vary in duration, from a few moments to hours, days, weeks, months, even years of contraction. And they can be about anything. I'll just mention here that what seems 'light' or 'open' to you may not be light or open at all. It's just as easy to be contracted over thoughts about what enlightenment might be like as it is to be contracted over breaking up with your girlfriend. Contraction comes about through a narrowing of attention, a congealing, directing and focusing of thought and feeling that becomes increasingly internalized.

Most people don't really question into what the process of contraction is, what really happens. But some do recognize that there is this tendency for people to become very scattered and spaced out or to become overly focused, obsessed with thoughts and storylines and feeling-tones. And this has given rise to many techniques and strategies designed to calm the mind and control the scattering or the focusing.

Any strategy or 'technique' you apply to bodymind already has an agenda because it is the product of the presumptions underlying how you experience the world and yourself which are themselves products of the process of locating a sense of a "knower" or "self-image", an "I". The agenda is to strengthen the sense of an "I" or a "self" that is "doing" the practice. If you engage in such practices, what you will actually be doing is practising self-image and if you practise self-image, what you end up with is self-image.

If you truly want to Wake Up, YOU need to get out of the way and allow the bodymind to sit as bodymind. You need to shut up and attend to what is already going on and allow the countless experiences to reveal themselves as the Total Field of experiences as the radiance of the luminosity of Experiencing itself. The bodymind is already breathing and it doesn't need your help, your direction, or any interference from you. It doesn't need you to concentrate on it or regulate it or count it. All that you need to do is feel into the breath at the diaphragm and the tanden but don't stop there. Use the breath as a touchstone, a place from which you can open to the whole of

experiencing.

Recently I had a conversation with a student about a technique they had encountered, called something like 'conscious breathing'. This involved following the instructions of a recording and deliberately regulating the breath by focusing on it and counting it. Counting the breath is a practice used widely by many groups and organizations and students sometimes ask me why we don't use it, so I will explain. I have done this practice of counting the breath. In fact, earlier on in my own practice, the Roshi instructed me to do it for a time so that I would understand it and would be able to explain to students why we don't do it. Its aim is to settle and calm the mind by directing attention to a point of focus -- the breath and the counting. This will have the effect of seemingly 'calming' the mind, but it's important to understand what's really going on. You're not stupid and attention is not stupid. If you focus on something, what you are doing by focusing is seemingly making whatever it is that you are focusing on stand out or light up. It seems to become bigger, more important. It's much like looking through a telescope - something far away seen through the lens of a telescope looks much bigger than it is in real life. A cow standing on a distant hillside looks the size of Godzilla. But if you take the telescope away from your eye and see it in context, you'll realize you can barely see it, it's so small.

When you focus on the breath and count it, you're trying to limit experiencing to only the in-breath and the out-breath and the numbers. Those details can seem 'lit up' or much bigger, much more important than anything else because you've thrown a huge circle of darkness on everything around them. If you do that, you will be practising focusing. Of course the mind seems to become quieter -- as I mentioned previously you're not stupid and attention is not stupid.

If you force the mind to pay attention to only one or two details of experiencing, you're numbing it. You're deliberately choosing stupidity. You're putting up a wall of attention to exclude everything else. But what will happen outside of your dull little place of quiet is that the patterns of attention that spawn all those pesky thoughts and feeling tones are regrouping and when your wall crumbles, which inevitably it will, they'll come back with a vengeance. Traditionally, it's compared to holding an empty gourd under water; when you let go of it, it pops back up to the surface and bobs about wildly.

You see, it's not the scattering that's the problem, it's the focusing. When you focus attention on one thing, you do that by excluding everything else. You become so used to focusing on one thing and then another, that if something comes up unexpectedly, it throws you off balance. Your attention becomes less and less flexible, less and less able to open to life as it actually is, full of interruptions and surprises, and change.

A single moment of seeing a thought rise and fall as you open around it is worth years of counting the breath. Why? Because counting the breath or applying any other strategy to the breath will not show you anything about how attention moves towards and away from what is noticed, including thoughts and feelings. You're just swapping one set of thoughts - your storylines - for another set

of thoughts, counting and concentrating on the breath.

In Anzan Hoshin roshi's book on the Buddha's Satipatthana sutta, "The Straight Path: Zen Teachings on the Foundations of Mindfulness", he says,

The practice is not to concentrate on the breath, but to just breathe the breath. If you try to "concentrate" on the breath, what will happen is that you will abstract yourself from the actual situation. You will create some kind of special realm and you'll enter into conflict with yourself by trying to screen out what is really just your own life. So, just sit and breathe the breath. When you get lost in a thought, or in a feeling, you have separated yourself from the rest of your experience. So when you have noticed this, gently return to this moment of breathing in or breathing out.

He also says:

The practice is actually just being aware. It is not really about following the breath or trying to produce some kind of feeling tone of "being one with the breath." Zazen is the practise of experience as it actually is. This begins with being mindful, and so you are using the breath to be reminded of that and to show you what your mindfulness is like. Just sit and breathe. Do not try to concentrate on your breath. You are not trying to make any particular mental state happen, you are just seeing what's happening by looking into the breath.

Although some contemporary Soto Zen Teachers, especially those in the West, might have counted the breath and now instruct their students to do this, our own practice is based directly on Eihei Dogen zenji's foundations and those Awakened Ancestors who have come before him.

In the Eihei Koroku, Dogen zenji says,

In our practice the most essential matter is sitting in the correct posture. Next it is important to release the breath with a calm mind. In the Narrow Path there are two ways of doing zazen. The first is counting the breath and the other is to contemplate the body as impure. So a practitioner of the Narrow Path would control the rhythm of the breath through counting the respirations. However, the practice of the Awakened Ones and Ancestors is completely different from the Narrow Path. A Discourse says, " You should never follow styles of practice of the Narrow Path which are based upon 'cultivation'. (EK 2:97)

and

The Shibunritsu and Kusha schools that are active in Japan currently are of this sort. The Vast Path way of balancing the breath is just to know that a long breath is long and a short breath is short. Breath rises and falls at the lower belly. Breathing in is breathing in and breathing out is breathing out. However the breath is, breathe in and breathe out from the lower belly. When you breathe in this way through the belly, the impermanence of your life becomes clear and the mind stills itself. (Eihei Koroku 2: 96)

And so in "The Straight Path", Roshi also says,

The body breathes. It breathes in and it breathes out. Begin with this. Know this moment of breathing. Attending to the breath, attending to the body, attending to movement, attending to sitting, standing, walking, or lying down, is attending directly to the experience of body. To see directly the rising and falling, the coming and going, the birth and death of each moment, is the Straight Path. So we begin with this body, we begin with this breath.

Note that he says "So we begin with this body, we begin with this breath". He doesn't tell us to focus on the breath or follow it or concentrate on it. Instead he is pointing to the practice of feeling into the breath and body, in the same breath, at the same time.

Just feel this breath as it is. Without focusing on it, without counting, without manipulating it, just breathe. Open attention to the sensations of the breath, but simultaneously open to the rest of the sensations of the bodymind sitting; open to seeing and hearing; open to as many details of experiencing as you are able, all at the same time, all in the same breath. Do this now, in this breath. And now again. And now again. At first it may seem very effortful, but that is because your attention is used to jumping about like a spoiled child. It has to learn to attend, to be available to the open intelligence of the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors. It has to learn to be a 'big person' instead of a petulant child. And as you practise this, coming back to the breath again and again with each breath, practising this 'Beginner's Mind', over time you will find the gaps in your mindfulness will shorten.

Then you will begin to see what gives rise to those gaps, how they happen, how you get lost. But that will be for the next Dharma Talk.

As I mentioned in the previous Dharma Talk in this series, paying attention to the sensations of the breath, the real details of the real breath as it really is just brings about what is actually going on. It is not a matter of drilling down into the sensations to dig up some special thing, some kind of hidden ore that will make us spiritual or saintly. Or to construct some miracle device out of them that can let us float above our real lives. The simplicity of the practice is so honest and direct that it allows us to be really honest and direct.

Breathing in, sky becomes breath. Breathing out, breath becomes sky. You have never experienced this breath before. Earth and water, wind and breath, nothing held and no grasping. Just breathe and experience this measureless moment with the sensations of fingers and toes and belly and spine and colours and forms. Attend to what already is.

The Touchstone 20: Fudo Myo-o Part 2  
presented by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
Dainen-ji, January 28th, 2017

In the previous Dharma Talk I spoke a little about the Bodhisattva known as "Acala Vidyaraja" in Sanskrit, or Fudo Myo-o in Japanese. He is also known by the name "Acalanatha". "cala" means "immovable" and "ntha" means "protector". He is immovable because he is Awareness in Itself and Awareness does not move. Awareness is the context in which everything comes and goes. He is also not a "he" or a "she", male or female, of course, but the traditional texts use the convention of saying "he" so that is what I will use here.

Fudo is immovable because he is always as he is and to represent this he stands chained to a rock. Who chained him there? He did, just to make sure. This also represents the determination of Teachers and monastics to work for the liberation of beings from confusion.

A sword is upraised in his right hand and a looped cord is held in his left hand. He is blue-black in colour, surrounded by a sea of flames and he appears to be very fierce. He has one eye that looks up, while the other looks down, and he has a fang that protrudes over his upper lip and one that protrudes over his lower lip. As strange as all of this might seem at first glance, to the practised eye of a monastic, every detail of Fudo-o's appearance conveys instruction.

He is indigo, blue/black in colour, perhaps similar to the deep blue/black sky of late evening. The blue/black represents the vastness of sunyata, or emptiness. In our Lineage, he is often shown wearing black monastic robes. Chinese or Japanese paintings and statues usually show Acala wearing the clothing of a king or ruler because he is the unshakeable and immovable Lord of Luminosity.

"Luminosity", as we use this word does not carry the meaning of some sort of heavenly light. "Luminosity" is a way of speaking of "Knowing". It's not code for a god or some sort of entity. It's not a form of pantheism. Please bear in mind that the Bodhisattvas we have been discussing are not meant to be understood as people or entities or representatives of an entity. They are sets of

instructions.

Acala looks up with one eye and looks down with the other in order to see through the higher and lower realms of the "Six Realms of Being" at the same time.

The six realms are useful as a description of the various states of mind and behaviour that people fall into. They are: the hell realm of contraction, of being completely convinced of the densest states of fear and rage; the realm of hungry ghosts, in which one is thoroughly overwhelmed by a sense of poverty and neediness; the animal realm of going from eating to shitting to sleeping; the human realm of lust and fickleness; the realm of the asuras or titans or warlike gods who are caught within a continual struggle to achieve dominance, and the realm of the devas or shining beings who are sunk in bliss and self-satisfaction. These are all states that people fall into.

So Acala sees into all of these realms with eyes that look up and down simultaneously. And as to how he sees them - as the Roshi says in the teisho "The Fire: Acala Vidyaraja:

Fudo Myo-o's eyes glare wrathfully, without fear. No compromise is to be seen in them, because he realizes that each thing is always workable, no matter how loathsome, no matter how full of longing, no matter how desperate, no matter how distracted, no matter how anxious, no matter how asinine, no matter how cowardly, or how arrogantly we might be, all of these states are workable. What is it that is aware of them? What is it that is aware of your thoughts and feelings? Who are you, really?

This is the realm of luminosity in which all apparent worlds are rising and turning. This is what is seen so clearly by the eyes of Acala Vidyaraja.

Acala Vidyaraja holds a looped cord in his hand, sometimes described as a lariat or a rope formed into a lasso. In Buddhist texts such as the "Sadhanamala", the Hindu gods, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and Kandarpa are said to be evil because they cause endless rebirths. So one interpretation of the rope or cord is that Fudo uses it to bind these Hindu gods as well as those who are ruled by passion, aggression and stupidity.

In our Lineage the cord is symbolic of the Precepts. Acala is chained to the rock on which he or she sits or stands by the vow to liberate all beings. He is enveloped by the flames of passion, aggression and ignorance which consume the beings who live in this hell realm of confusion and grasping.

The sword he holds upraised in his right hand is the sword of insight or Prajna, which cuts through confusion. The Roshi says in the teisho "The Fire: Acala Vidyaraja":

In his left hand, he holds a cord, a rope, which binds each thing to its own nature, which allows each thing to be as it is in its true nature of luminosity. This is also the cord of the precepts. The

sword of wisdom and the cord of the precepts mean that we must each practice completely. No matter how deep our insights might be or how grand our little spiritual experiences might seem, they are of no use whatsoever unless we apply them in each moment of activity, in each thing that we do, in how we are. How we are must be rooted in the nature of things as they are. Our activity, our speech, each thing that we do, must be rooted in this moment as it is.

Now you may be asking yourself what this practice has to do with you, because you haven't been given instruction in it, you haven't been told to do any sort of practice associated with Fudo Myo-o, and this may be the first time you've heard of him.

For anyone who practises for more than a few weeks, it becomes increasingly clear that it's really easy to waver in your resolve. The slightest turbulation in your life can seem like enough of a reason not to sit. Feeling a bit unwell can seem like enough of a reason not to sit. Being on vacation can seem like enough of a reason not to sit. Just feeling like you don't want to sit can seem like enough of a reason not to sit.

But for those who are here, who have practiced for weeks or months or years, you've had to learn to stand firm. Or at least a bit firm. You know that there are states that will come up that say that sitting is too difficult. And you know that if you feel the breath and feel the body and pay attention to putting one foot in front of the other is not difficult; neither is sitting down on a cushion; neither is sitting there for five minutes; for ten minutes; for 30 minutes. And that's as long as you need to sit. You also know that sometimes old habits of thought or feeling will come up: states of boredom, runaway discursiveness, restlessness, fear, confusion, euphoria, silence - any of these and many others might come up in your practice. And you know that all you need do as soon as you recognize that a thought or a feeling or a storyline is taking up your attention is to come back to the touchstone of the breath at the diaphragm and tanden, to open to whole bodily sensation and seeing and hearing and begin again. And over time, you can also learn that you can practise opening to reality not just when you are sitting, but all of the time and this has a profound effect on your life.

The practice of basic mindfulness is very simple and it is very powerful because of its simplicity. It has a depth and breadth that need to be fully explored before one is given other practices to do. And this is because ALL of the more advanced practices come from the practice of basic mindfulness. Without that, the rest would be meaningless. So we begin by establishing a very strong, very stable practice of basic mindfulness.

By practising basic mindfulness, by coming back to the touchstone of the breath again and again and again, you are strengthening attention. You stop wobbling quite so much. You stop falling falling into states and storylines quite so much. Increasingly you recognize them for what they are - simple fabrications. You're less convinced by them and so more often you make the choice to open past them by coming back to the touchstone of the breath from which to open to the whole of

your experiencing. It doesn't matter what the content of the thoughts and feeling-tones are telling you. It's the fact that you can recognize that they are thoughts and feeling-tones. They're like ghosts. In reality there are no ghosts, and it makes no sense to say that "some" ghosts are more real or less real than others. All of the thoughts and feeling-tones you propagate and follow are like this. None of them make sense. Open around them.

What happens when you open around them? You begin to practise Knowing (capital K Knowing) instead of talking to yourself about stuff you think you already know. You begin to practise an immediacy and directness of experiencing that is alive and fresh in this moment and the next.

Fudo Myo-o is sometimes depicted in statuary or scrolls seated, practising the immovability of Awareness. Sometimes Fudo is shown standing, representing the Activity of Aware Space, luminosity vividly radiant as all experiences.

So let's sit now, and allow attention to fall open to the touchstone of the breath, the sensations of the body, the colours and forms and sounds. Acala sits on a rock, enveloped in flames. You sit on a zafu and zabuton, enveloped in the vividness of experiencing. Practise opening to that.

The Touchstone 21: Mahavairocana Part 1  
presented by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
Dainen-ji, Saturday, March 25th, 2017

When you feel the touchstone of the breath, you are knowing the sensations of the breath. When you open attention to hearing, you are knowing the sounds and the spaces between the sounds. When you open attention to seeing, you are opening to the knowing of colours and forms. For a split-second at a time you know directly and without interpretation, and then you start thinking again. Because you still believe that knowing is about you, the knower, collecting knowns. This is how your practice gets really complicated. And yet, even when you are engaged in the ways you confuse yourself, sometimes you know that you are confused.

Whatever is known arises within Knowing. We can know nothing else other than the fact of knowing. There is nothing apart from Knowing in Itself to be known. This is sometimes symbolically represented by Mahavairocana, or the radiance of Knowing, or one might say, 'the Big Radiator'. This Radiance does not radiate from somewhere to somewhere, it simply radiates.

Mahavairocana is the Primordial Buddha, the Buddha before all other Buddhas. All other Buddhas have a history, even if it is legendary. Mahavairocana is not a particular historical Buddha. He, or

she, or it, is not bound by time because she is not anybody. It is what Sakyamuni Buddha and all other Buddhas who came after him Woke Up to.

The Brahmajala sutra, which Anzan Hoshin roshi translated with some assistance from me, describes a meeting between Sakyamuni Buddha and Vairocana Buddha:

Sakyamuni Buddha and that whole assembly had prostrated themselves together in homage before the feet of Vairocana Buddha, [and] Sakyamuni asked, "How can all living beings of earth and sky within these universes unfold the path of the Ten Stages of Opening to Openness? What signs arise when Wakeful Ones are about to realize the fruition of Awakening as Awareness? Amongst the numberless aspects that all originate from Buddha Nature, please present in detail what the seeds of all Wakeful Ones are.

Immediately Vairocana Buddha was filled with vast joy. The space manifested the actual nature of his luminosity, the original harmony of the Body of Reality which had become Buddha and which was always already so. He said to the assembly, "All you students of the Buddha, listen carefully, reflect well on my words, and apply them in practice. For incalculable hundreds of eons I have practiced Primordial Awareness and followed through with it. Releasing every thing merely usual and practicing to the highest edge of complete and utter Awakening, I became known as Vairocana, Inherent Luminosity.

I dwell within the Lotus Matrix of all worlds and realms, and the ocean of all worlds is contained within this lotus throne. This throne is an embrace of a thousand petals, each petal containing a universe, so that there are a thousand universes in all. I transform myself into a thousand Sakyamunis to occupy these thousand universes. Each universe in each petal contains, in turn, ten billion Mount Sumerus, ten billion suns and moons, ten billion sets of four continents including ten billion Jam-bud-vipas, each with its Sakya seated beneath a bodhi tree, opening to Openness.

While each of these Sakyamunis presents Primordial Awareness for Wakeful Ones which you have just asked about, each of the other nine hundred and ninety-nine Sakyamunis also give rise to ten billion Sakyamunis who, in turn, do the same.

Each Buddha within the thousand petals is a transformation of myself and the ten billion Sakyamunis are, in turn, transformations of these thousand Buddhas. I am the source of all of them.

Thus I am called Vairocana Buddha, the Awake Awareness Which is Originary Luminosity.

So, we can see that while Mahavairocana Buddha is not someone with a personal history, it is a way of trying to talk about profound aspects of realized-practice.

If we want to know what the Buddhas Wake Up to, what Awareness in Itself is, what Mahavairocana is, the only way to do that is to be aware, fully, thoroughly and completely through moment to moment mindfulness which ripens into insight and then matures as the fruition of prajnaparamita. The Teachings symbolized and embodied by the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and the Continuing Lineage of Awakened Ancestors are sets of instructions and explanations that help us to open to the Knowing, the Luminosity of Awake Awareness.

So what we ultimately Wake Up to is symbolized by Mahavairocana, which contains and subsumes the Teachings of Fudo Myo-o, Samantabhadra, Manjusri and Avalokitesvara.

I will briefly review these:

Knowing never moves from what it is; it is the context in which everything comes and goes. This immovability of Knowing is symbolized as Acalanatha Vidyaraja or Fudo Myo-o.

Experiencing has a quality of spaciousness, of vast openness. Whatever appears to be experienced is the activity of vastness arising within Knowing. It is inexpressibly, all-pervasively rich and expansive. This is embodied as Samantabhadra, All-Pervasive Richness. The figure of Samantabhadra represents the culmination of all of the realizations and practices of Avalokitesvara and Manjusri.

Manjusri symbolizes the brightness and freshness of intelligence; the precision and attention to detail required to actually practise with contraction.

Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of compassion, the activity of ceaseless Opening, hears the suffering of beings bound by contraction.

But just to be clear I must say this once again; When we use the words, "Awareness", "Openness", "Knowing", "Luminosity", "spaciousness", they are not code for some sort of god or entity or intelligent directing and determining force for the universe. We are not talking about a form of Pantheism. Nor are we talking about a feeling about things.

At the beginning of all formal sittings, we recite "The Three Jewels", which state that:

Awareness is the only condition.

All that is arises as the display of Awareness.

This is the seamless expanse of all that is.

Every way of knowing and everything that is known are expressions of Knowing in Itself. When there is confusion or clarity, when you experience anger or impatience, or love or hate, there is the knowing of these. All that you can experience is experiencing and all experiences arise within

awareness of them, and point directly to awareness.&nbsp; Everything that presents itself as experiencing, anything that seems to stand out or stand forth, is arising within the knowing of it.

The Luminosity of Knowing which is radiant as knowns is symbolized, is indicated, is pointed to AS Mahavairocana Buddha. Realization is not a matter of knowing Mahavairocana but of realizing your true nature as Mahavairocana. And this is not a matter of knowing some "thing" but of opening how you know to the total field of knowns arising with the fact of Knowing.

As the Roshi has said,

The Total field of all possibilities cannot express what Awareness in Itself is, and yet everything that arises is the expression of Awareness in Itself.

There is so much to say about this that there is almost nothing that I can say about it. And since I broke a tooth yesterday and it has been somewhat reconstructed and I feel like I have been hit in the face with a hammer but I want to talk with students in daisan, I will just leave this here for now.

The touchstone here is slippery because it is everything in all directions all around you. And that is exactly what people tend NOT to notice. Zen practice is how we can open past this tendency to what the Buddhas are, to who we all actually are.

This is why we have Dharma Assemblies, retreats, and Zen as such.

So let's get to it. Ready? No? Yes, you are.

The Touchstone 22: Mahavairocana Part 2  
presented by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
Dainen-ji, Saturday, July 29th, 2017

This breath in this moment. Feeling into this breath, opening to the whole body and mind and the fact of experiencing right now brings us into reality.

Throughout this series of Dharma Talks I have tried to provide you with a touchstone you can use to understand the beginnings of Zen practice and how it matures and deepens.

When we do the practice of chanting in addition to zazen, we have as the most basic chants the

Three Jewels and the Ten Proclamations.

The Three Jewels describe what the Buddhas and the continuing Lineage of Zen Ancestors realize:

Awareness is the Only Condition.

All that is arises as the Display of Awareness.

This is the Seamless Expanse of all that is.

The Ten Proclamations are an ancient assembly of symbols that describe facets of how we realize through practice what Buddhas Wake Up to.

Namu, Mahavairocana Buddha.

Namu, Sakyamuni Buddha.

Namu, Acala Vidyaraja.

Namu, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva.

Namu, Manjusri Bodhisattva.

Namu, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva.

Namu, all Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas.

Namu, all beings throughout all times, all directions.

Namu, Mahaprajnaparamita, Mother of Wisdom.

Namu, the Lineage of Awakened Ancestors.

These too are touchstones that provide very condensed descriptions of how to practise and what practice is and how it unfolds. But, of course, because they are so brief they use symbols and metaphors such as the mythological Bodhisattvas Avalokitesvara, Manjusri, Samantabhadra, the vidyaraaja Acalanatha, and the non-historical primordial Buddha Mahavairocana. As with all of the forms of Zen practice as presented by Anzan Hoshin roshi, there are very good reasons why we chant these old words and names and use these old symbols. They provide instructions, touchstones, for us to use now.

Mahavairocana Buddha is where the Ten Proclamations begin, what practice ultimately realizes, and where I will put down this touchstone series of Dharma Talks.

As I said last time, Mahavairocana Buddha is difficult to talk about. I asked Anzan Hoshin roshi how to describe Mahavairocana Buddha and he answered my question with a question:

"What is brighter than light?"

Often the best answer to a question can be a question that goes deeper and leads us further, past the limits of our previous understandings.

All that we see, all colours and forms, each other's faces, the wall, the floor, the sky, &nbsp; we see only because of light. Most of the time this is reflected light, meaning that light reflects off of an object and into our eyes. Look at almost any object - a cup, a pencil, a zafu, your cat, a building - and what you are seeing is reflected light which your brain translates as 'cup', 'pencil', 'zafu' etc. What you are knowing as 'pencil' is your perception of a pencil as reflected light. It is not what the pencil actually is. It's not solid.

When you recognize that you are experiencing a state, that is possible because states are not solid either. All states are transparent to the Knowing of them. This knowing is traditionally called Komyo, or Luminosity. Komyo means "bright brightness." "Myo" has the meaning of the first light of morning spreading on the horizon. And this is the Radiance spoken of by all of the Awakened Ancestors through the Buddha's Dharma. In the same way that you can see objects with your eyes because of reflected light, you are able to see states, thoughts, feeling-tones, storylines because they are the radiance of the luminosity of Knowing. And this is what makes it possible for you to open all around and past them. You are not the states; what you think of as 'you' and all of the states 'you' experience arise within Knowing or Luminosity as its radiance.

Mahavairocana, the Buddha that is before all historical Buddhas, is the primordial or "always already" condition or situation of Awareness or Knowing or Experiencing. This is luminosity, the knowingness that is active as whatever is known. Each known is the radiance of that luminosity.

"What is brighter than light?"

We misunderstand that what we tend to understand about ourselves and the world is only the product of our own tendencies. Tendencies are how our attention and cognition arrange our perceptions. Zazen is the straight path laid out for us by the historical Buddha, Sakyamuni, to understand how we have understood ourselves and the world and move past this into a world we cannot imagine. Imagination is just more of our tendencies, irresponsible to reality. Every time that we wake up from what attention became entangled into, we become more capable of taking responsibility for being Buddha, truly awake. Zazen is not about pretending to be a Buddha but about receiving and taking this responsibility and the freedom that it reveals.

Through zazen, the reality of Mahavairocana becomes not just where we live but who we always really were.

In 1227, Eihei Dogen Kigen zenji wrote in the "Fukanzazengi" or "How Everyone Can Sit":

Primordial Awareness is in essence perfect and pervades everywhere. How could it be dependent

upon what anyone does to practise or realize it? The movement of Reality does not need us to give it a push. Do I need to say that it is free from delusion? The vast expanse of Reality can never be darkened by the dust of presumptions. Who then could believe that it needs to be cleaned of such dust to be what it is? It is never separate from where you are, so why scramble around in search of it?

The thing is, if there is the slightest gap, sky and earth are ripped apart. If you give rise to even a flicker of like and dislike, you lose your mind in delusion. Just suppose you become puffed up about your understanding and inflate your little experiences: You think you have seen the truth, attained the Way, recognized the Luminosity of mind and can grasp at heaven. You might think that these initial jaunts about the borders are entering the realm of enlightenment but you've lost the Way of complete liberation.

May I point out the one from Jetavana, the Buddha, who was himself Primordial Awareness and still sat for six years? And how about Bodhidharma transmitting the seal of Awareness through doing wall-gazing at Shaolin temple for nine years? The echo of those are heard even now. If this is how it was with the great ones and their diligence, then how about you in your own practice? You should stop chasing understanding through juggling words, allow the external seeking of your mind to collapse upon itself and light up your own nature. Doing this, the bodymind will drop through itself spontaneously revealing your Original Nature. If you wish to be realized in Suchness, immediately practice Suchness.

Don't give rise to the mind's common concepts, the judging of thoughts and observations. Don't sit to become Buddha because you can't fabricate a Buddha out of sitting or lying down.

Once you have found your posture, breathe in and out deeply, sway left and right and then settle firmly and steadily. Think of not-thinking. How do you think of not-thinking? Be Before Thinking. These are the basics of zazen.

Today, during this Dharma Assembly, please let us use this moment to practise the Suchness of the posture, the Suchness of breath, the Suchness of the tanden, the Suchness of the whole body with these arms and legs and eyes and ears. Let us use the priceless jewel, the touchstone of this breath in this moment to unfold Suchness and be enfolded within Suchness.

Dainen-ji, March 23rd, 2013

"Beginner's Mind" or shoshin is practising the recognition that this moment is always fresh. Zazen is not taking up a stance about the world; it is sitting down and sitting up straight and opening past our stances to allow reality beyond our thoughts and images and states. And so, just as each moment is always newly this moment, in each moment of zazen we always begin again. If you become lost, you find yourself back here with the touchstone of this breath.

As you practise coming back to the breath again and again with each breath, practising this "Beginner's Mind", over time you will find the gaps in your mindfulness will shorten. And that you will then begin to see what gives rise to those gaps, how they happen, how you get lost. I mentioned this in the previous Dharma Talk in this series and I will talk about it a bit more now. In fact, you will hear about this again and again and not only from me but in many teisho and Dharma Talks because it is such a big and such an important topic.

This is a big topic because there is not just how these gaps in mindfulness happen, but the strategies that students might apply to them if they are noticed at all, which can further complicate things.

For a long time in one's practice it can seem as though things are fairly open and clear in one moment: You know you are sitting on a zafu, in a room; you can feel the sensations of the body sitting, the breath; you can see the wall and hear the sounds in the room. It's all going quite well. But in the next moment, it can seem that you are finally waking up from a dream-filled dazed state that you might have been lost in for moments, or days, for all that you know. It can seem that way but, of course, one doesn't go from one state into another state with nothing in between. Between a more open state and a state in which your posture and your mind have slumped, there was a succession of movements of attention, of thoughts and feeling-tones that your attention was following.

Wandering mind and sinking mind are not that different. Both involve shrinking back and away from reality, inverting and internalizing attention further and further. Wandering mind is not as dense as sinking mind, however. You can quite easily follow a storyline for a period of time while simultaneously knowing what is going on around you. We are well practised in this as we do it all the time - at work, at home, in the middle of a conversation with another person, for example. For all intents and purposes you seem to be listening, but you're really up behind the eyes already formulating a response before the other person has even finished speaking. It happens all the time.

In the series "Sitting Up Straight", the Roshi says,

Sinking mind, konchin, and wandering mind, sanran, are not all that different. In order to become lost in thought, your attention must already invert and narrow. This inversion and narrowing is of

course much stronger with sinking mind. But even within sinking mind there is wandering. There are bits and pieces of discursiveness, there is imagery, and of course a flux of feeling tones.

Wandering mind is a slippery slope. You may think you can multi-task practising as well as follow your favourite stories, but this is not practising. It is fragmenting and dividing your attention which is not what practice is. And in the process of doing this, you are engaged in the activity of piling up and propagating the three klesas of passion, aggression and stupidity.

There's no middle ground with this. It's as with the forms. You are either doing them or you are not. A small example: when you take care of your cushion, it should be rotated clockwise, pressed four times, and while doing that, you should be feeling into the sensations of the body, the posture, feeling the fabric under your hand, as well as feeling your hand pressing the cushion. If you're turning the cushion counterclockwise because you're thinking about something else while you are doing this very simple task, well, what's that about? You're not doing the form, you're just paying lip service to it while going about the usual wandering about in states and storylines which is so habitual that much of the time you don't even notice you're doing it.

Sinking mind is much denser than wandering mind and there is no mistaking it. It's completely abandoning your practice as you allow your posture to slump and your mind to sink into nonsensical half-dreams. You may fall asleep, or you may just spent a period of time in a kind of no-man's land, in which you have abstracted yourself to such a degree you don't even really know where you are. Or care. When you become lost in thoughts and fragments of dreams, your attention has withdrawn from the colours and forms and sounds and sensations, from the details of present experiencing -- where you are and what is going on around you. The colours and forms seem to flatten, hearing becomes less distinct; sensations seem quite far away or dulled down.

But you always wake up from these states. Eventually. Even if you do nothing you will become more and more contracted until the contraction passes through itself and then you will wake up. But you don't have to wait that long. You can be much more intentional about waking up. What usually happens is that some external sound or a strong sensation, such as a pain in your knee, or the unexpected touch of a practice advisor adjusting your posture will break through the swirling fog of dreams and you'll find yourself back on the cushion again.

And so you straighten up and begin again.

Now, there's something in this I'd like to bring to your attention. Students who have been practising at Dainen-ji for any length of time understand that there is a tendency for attention to move to the area of the head. You can see this very easily when you get lost in thought, for example. The activity of the thoughts will seem to take place in and around the head and there appears to be little bodily sensation. This is because you're so fascinated by the false reality you've created with thoughts and ideas and concepts, that you've abstracted yourself from basic physical reality - the fact of the bodymind sitting on the cushion in the space of the room, surrounded by colours and

forms and sounds. This is obviously not good. If you don't know where you are and what's going on around you, how can any of your thoughts be balanced, practical or realistic? They're occurring in a space that seems entirely separate from the rest of the world, the gravity free, consequence free space of your "personal" thoughts and feelings about who and what everything is.

On realizing that attention has become congealed and contracted, students will often straighten their posture and open their eyegaze. Wheeee! You just got three inches taller and the world got very bright. It's certainly a quick way of cutting through the fog, but there's a snag with this because it's not enough. It's not that there's a problem with straightening up and opening the eye gaze. But if that's all you do, you are going to get lost in thought again within a short space of time. Straightening the posture and opening the eye gaze is good, but if you don't go further, you've turned those two elements of practice into a strategy, a bit of a cheap trick. And so sometimes, during a sitting round, all around the room there are people bobbing up and down, straightening, slumping, straightening, slumping. It's a lot of work doing all of that and you don't need to do it, actually.

What you need to do is feel into the sensations of the whole body sitting as well as open to peripheral vision and the hearing and the sense of smell. You need to practise opening all of the capacities of bodymind, not just one or two. You need to feel the breath at the diaphragm and tanden, as a place from which to open to the whole of experiencing. And stay there, sit still, resting in the openness of experiencing instead of wandering in and out, in and out, bouncing up and down, slumping, straightening, slumping, straightening. Just stay in posture and practise the posture of mind AS WELL as the posture of the body. Stay with what you're actually doing. Begin with the breath as a touchstone and with the next breath, use it as a touchstone. If we can feel the breath, then we can open attention further to reality.

And here's another place where students get stuck. Sometimes they will hunker down around the sensations of the breath and body, as though doing that could save them from their thoughts. If you direct attention 'downward', to the breath, as though from a point behind your eyes, that's not really practising either. And what will happen is that although you may notice some sensations associated with the breath, again, in a matter of minutes, you will be lost in thought again.

The ways in which your attention arranges itself to make it seem that the storylines and feeling tones and states are real and should be given all of your attention are such that you become so enfolded in them, so convinced by them, that you cannot imagine an existence free of them. Sometimes students actually worry that if the stream of thoughts and feeling tones stopped, they would be incapable of intelligent thought. Nothing could be further from the truth. If you want to open intelligence, you need to first let go of all of the ways in which you habitually cut yourself off from the world and all of the information the world offers you moment after moment.

These states of wandering and sinking mind do not spring up from the zafu to infect you and do not come up because you are sitting zazen. What you see when you sit zazen is a closer glimpse

into how your attention tends to move ALL of the time -- when you're at home, when you're alone, when you're with other people, when you are doing anything at all that you do.

What you do everything WITH is a matter of how your attention is, and is experienced by attention.

So of course, the quality of your attention, your ability to make intelligent use of attention, will have a profound effect on the course of your life. It will affect every decision you make, large or small; it will affect your relationships, your job, all of your choices. Attention moves continuously. It opens, closes, shifts, wanders, sinks, opens again, becomes focused, obsessive, and sometimes loosens so much you lose all sense of direction. Sometimes it will spontaneously open, presenting you with rare flashes of simply knowing what to do and how to do it (which you later take all of the credit for, as though you made it happen). But that is all very random and most of the time it's just moving from this to that without any real intentionality. It is why you have such difficulty doing things in a straight line, why it's so hard to follow something through to completion, why you never get around to doing all of those things you say you have always wanted to do.

The difference between these movements of attention occurring during zazen or occurring when you're in the midst of doing other things is that when you are sitting zazen, it's not about you or any of the things you 'do' or want to do. It is about your attention. It's looking into the one thing that determines all else about your life.

Shikai O-sensei's cats love to play games. But they're very intelligent cats. If you first dangle a feather tied to a string, hanging from a stick, they'll be mildly interested in the movements of the feather but FAR more interested in where the movement of the feather is coming from. And within moments they have figured it out and are not fascinated by the feather, but instead are looking at the stick and beyond that, your hand holding the stick.

In a manner of speaking, zazen is not about the dangling toys of life. It's about what they really are, what everything really is, what is true and what is untrue, what makes sense and does not make sense. It's about seeing and releasing the fascination with 'knowns' to begin to understand what the Knowing is in which all knowns arise. And obviously not being clear about this is not really even knowing which end is up when it comes to the feathers and sticks, life and death and everything in between.

By sitting zazen, you have the opportunity to see how attention moves, how you are convinced by your own deluded storylines and ideas and notions and how to wake up from them. Instead of acting out storylines, ideas and impulses in your life and having to put up with the consequences of buying into chunks of fool's gold, you can save yourself a lot of trouble by simply learning to differentiate between what is true and what is false. And as your practice deepens your ability to discriminate between the two becomes stronger and clearer, thus helping you to make stronger, clearer decisions about everything that you do.

It's not that we have to try to make the mind still or calm. Thoughts will come up. Storylines spring up seemingly out of nowhere. It's not even that you are 'doing' these. They just bubble up out of the chemistry of bodymind. So there's no need, when noticing a thought, to try to punch a hole in the space where the thought is, or to try to replace one form of thought with another. For example, tying yourself in knots by noticing a thought about a conversation you had yesterday and trying to replace it with a thought about mindfulness. That's just swapping one thought with another and shows you nothing about the mechanisms that are generating the thought.

This is why, in the series "Sitting Up Straight", the Roshi says,

Opening to and attending mindfully to this moment, you find that there is an infinite infinity of sensations, of sounds, variations in temperature. Even the colours of the wall, although white, are many different shades of white.

Rather than struggling and trying to survive... just let yourself die away. Let that thought die away. Let the past moment die away. Let the moment drop through itself. Do this, and you will know shinjin datsuraku, dropping through the bodymind.

You just have to be willing to enjoy this moment as it actually is.

If there is sinking, feel that, feel what it's actually like, without attempting to push it away or steel yourself. And without snuggling into it, without collapsing, without becoming someone experiencing the sinking. All around the sensations of sinking, everything is quite bright.

Thoughts and feelings will come up. You will experience wandering mind and sinking mind while you are sitting. That is inevitable because this is how attention will tend to move unless you are being intentional because it is being manipulated by the mechanisms of self-image. Self-image wants to lose itself in states, it wants to hide and allowing attention to wander or sink are two of the ways in which it can play out an agenda of distraction and abstraction, to render you so dulled that you won't notice what it is really going on.

Even when there is wandering mind or sinking mind you can open to reality. You can use the touchstone of the breath to cut through the murkiness. There can be the noticing of discursiveness, the fragments of thoughts or dreams, the noticing of sleepiness, the noticing of dukkha, a feeling of unsatisfactoriness. And you can practise with these. You can feel the breath, keep your eye gaze open, feel the sensations of the legs crossed and the hands resting in the mudra. You can hear the sounds. Whatever states there are that arise are transparent to reality. You can feel through them, hear through them, see through them. And in allowing mindfulness to meet them without moving attention toward or away from them, over time you will come to realize that you can practise through any state you experience.

This is how the gaps in your mindfulness will shorten, how your practise can become more continuous. Nothing is excluded from this practice, no state of mind or body, no conditions, nothing at all. Your age, your gender, your state of health, everything that you experience is the display of awareness moving as Awareness as a ceaseless coming and going and ever-changing display of Awareness which itself never moves.

Stay with what is simply true, beginning with this breath, in this moment.

#### The Touchstone 4: The Three Natures

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, April 27th, 2013

What you are practising when you are sitting is knowing. I don't merely mean 'knowing things', or 'knowing about something', or even having some kind of secret knowledge. &nbsp;I mean knowing as the sheer capacity to know, the activity of knowing. This is traditionally compared to the ability of a mirror to show images rather than the reflections themselves, or the capacity of light to illuminate the darkness. This is called the Luminosity of Knowing in itself.

We usually have the idea that knowing is just our thoughts and feeling-tones and imagery and concepts. And so at first it's difficult for us to understand at all that the kind of Knowing that we learn through Zen practice is not the same as learning, memorizing, regurgitating what we have already learned. In fact it cannot be thought about it in a way that directly captures it. This is traditionally called its Traceless or Ungraspable aspect.

The kind of Knowing we learn through practising with open attention is much more direct than that and much simpler. It is so simple that it can be and is whatever can be known. This is called the Unobstructed aspect of knowing.

When you feel into the sensations of the breath you are coming back to the touchstone, the place from which you can begin to open to the directness and immediacy of experiencing as it actually is, without interpretation, without thinking about it. The touchstone of the breath is beyond all of our strategies because we don't 'do' it. Breathing is something the bodymind does for us. Any strategy we bring to it, any thought we have about it, any label we try to plaster over it, misses the point.

Mindfulness can never become a kind of habit, not even a 'special habit'. And the reason it can never be a habit is because to be mindful is to be mindful of this breath, this moment of seeing, of hearing, just as it is. It's not something you can crank up and then just leave to let it run itself.

It is experiencing the bodymind, the environment, the world -- in, as, and through the bodymind, together with bodymind, so that experiencing is all of one piece instead of being divided up into fragments that attention darts towards and away from.

In the Sattipatthana sutta, the Buddha spoke of knowing a short breath as a short breath; a long breath as a long breath. He didn't say "okay, so whenever you take a short breath you should say to yourself "short breath". He was talking about practising the Knowing (capital K knowing) of a short breath - which is direct, immediate, without words. It's too fast for words because together with that short breath there is seeing and hearing, the temperature of the air on your skin, the hands in the mudra, thumbs touching, the set of your shoulders and head and neck and spine, your legs crossed, the tip of the tongue against the roof of your mouth -- so many details that you could not possibly give words to them all.

He wasn't telling us to monitor the breath, to compare a short breath with a long breath, to categorize the breath as this or that or the other. He was saying "feel this breath as it is." It doesn't matter what kind of breath it is - long or short, but the knowing of long or short breath is felt without holding on to it, without considering it, without doing anything with the sensations of it at all. Because...you're still breathing. Let go of the last moment - the last split-second of feeling the breath in order to feel the breath as it is now in this split-second and the next and the next. You don't know how the breath is until the breath breathes and then it's gone as the bodymind continues to breathe. Always new, always fresh.

He was speaking of feeling into the sensations of the breath with the sensations of the breath. The bodymind feels the bodymind. If you start thinking about the sensations of the breath or label the sensations of the breath, you've moved away from the directness of the sensations. You've gone back to believing that knowing is about memorization and regurgitation of what is already known. You have lots of labels, lots of words and phrases in your collection of already-known stuff. That has nothing to do with the practise of Knowing (capital K knowing). If you manipulate the breath, to make it long or make it short, or push it against the back of the throat so that you sound like a wind tunnel in the mistaken notion that this will help you to feel it more clearly, this is also giving rise to this wanting to be the "knower", the one who is "doing" the breath. Just let the breath be as it is. The bodymind knows how to breathe and does not need your interference. It does not need you to change it or think about it or label it. If this were not the case you would not have survived infancy because you'd have forgotten to breathe.

With the onset of spring, we often open the windows of the Hatto and because this room on the second floor is as high as the tree tops, birdsong can be heard very clearly. When you are sitting and your attention is more open, the birdsong is heard together with seeing the wall, feeling into the sensations of the body, feeling the clothing on your skin, feeling the temperature of the air -- together with many, many other details that can be noticed. There is no focusing on this or that because these details are changing so rapidly that they are more a coming and going of details, a

continuous streaming of reality.

But if attention begins to narrow, it will congeal around a narrow range of perception. Since birdsong is something we quite enjoy, when there is this narrowing and fixating, attention will tend to latch on to the sound of a bird. If this narrowing of attention is propagated, mindfulness is reduced to only the noticing of the sound and you may even find that you're visualizing the kind of bird it is, or where it is relative to where you are sitting. You may even say to yourself "bird", plaster a label over it as though you didn't already know it to be a bird. And of course, as soon as you do that, you're no longer even listening to the bird, you've retracted attention away from the sound and you're listening to yourself! Inside your head. As though what's going on inside your head is the world. Ewwwww. Good thing that isn't true or you'd be stuck with it.

When you do this, you are not practising environmental awareness at all, you've turned your practice into "This is what I know. Me, me, me and what I know". This is what happens when self-image lays claim to experiencing. Self-image sets itself up as the knower at the center of experiencing, doing the experiencing, listing all of the things it knows.

This is labeling experiencing and when we do this, we have shrunk back from the vastness and vividness of experiencing and have reduced it to just this one 'thing' that I KNOW. This reinforces the sense of locatedness, the sense of an I that is separate from what is being experienced, which is really quite the opposite of practice.

What you need to do is to open to ALL of the sounds, near and far - the sound of the bird together with the sound of your own breathing; the sounds of traffic; the apparent 'silences' between the sounds. And do this by coming back to the touchstone of the breath, together with opening attention to the seeing, the sensations of the whole bodymind sitting - the balance and alignment of the posture, the details of thumb touching thumb in the mudra, legs crossed, your backside on the zafu. Don't focus on this or that detail because any detail is occurring in the midst of a vast number of other detail. Your practice is to open all of the capacities of bodymind to hear, see, smell, taste, think and feel all together, all at the same time, not to regurgitate what you have already learned, certainly not to identify, categorize and label everything you already know.

At any moment you notice you are focusing on something, come back to the touchstone of the breath, touch the breath and use this touchstone to refresh your practise of mindfulness. This breath is always new and fresh. If you are really feeling into it, you cannot freeze it to reduce it to a thought or a picture or a symbol of something else. It is always.....this breath being breathed by the whole bodymind.

The internalization of attention that is required in order to give rise to the sense of a knower in the midst of your sitting is the same internalization that enfolds you in all of the other states you experience. All of the states you get lost in are really the products of the five skandhas. The word "skandha" means "heap" or "accumulation." The Roshi explains that the five skandhas are a way

of describing how we experience what we are. The activity of these processes creates the illusion of an accumulation or localization of experiencing. and describe the basis of self-image, the illusion that there is a self doing the experiencing, a single entity in the midst of what is being experienced.

So whether you are experiencing wandering mind or sinking mind or "dukkha", a general sense of unsatisfactoriness, all of these are the result of internalizing attention and all of them have a whopping great big unhappy "I" in the middle of them that is refusing to open to the simplicity and clarity of experiencing as it actually is. To paraphrase something the Roshi once said in a teisho: It's rather like the guest who stubs out his cigarette in a plate of fried eggs generously offered him by his host. When you are in the midst of a state, that "I" that wants to be in the middle of it and have everything be about it, &nbsp;wants to hunker down, cut itself off from bodily sensation and seeing and hearing and all of the ways in which the openness of experiencing would cut through it. It doesn't want anything better than the toxic mindset it generates and it doesn't want to be interrupted. Opening to reality would interrupt its agenda, which is only ever about to perpetuating itself. States don't give you anything. They don't teach you anything. They just cut you off from the depth and breadth of experiencing to keep you locked in the belief that your states are who you are. You are not your thoughts or feelings, you are the awareness in which all thoughts and feelings arise. Awareness is the context in which all knows rise and fall.

The soft spring air, the morning light, the scent of incense arise together with this breath, this moment of seeing and hearing. Feel directly; see directly; hear directly without making anything 'the point'. Not even the breath. Use the breath as a touchstone, a place to come back to, to open to the whole of experiencing. This IS your life and nothing is more important than living it fully, in each and every moment, to the best of your ability.

The Touchstone 5: Washing Rice with Water

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, June 22nd, 2013

When you feel into the sensations of the breath at the diaphragm and tanden, you are opening attention to something that is going on right now. But of course there is more going on right now than just the breath. The whole bodymind is the display of reality and all that arises around the bodymind is also the display of reality. Reality is beyond your thoughts and feelings and interpretations about what is going on.

The breath is not a kind of life raft that you can hang on to, to fend off thoughts and feelings. It's

not a 'pure' thing in the midst of some kind of corruption that you can turn to for a cure. It's not some bit of you that is more 'essentially you' than any other bit of you; it's not mommy or daddy or some kind of magic force that's going to look after you. Of course not. It's just the breath. And of course not, there is no such essence because there is no solid self, there is no magic mommy or daddy. And the cure for the sickness of dukkha or suffering that the Buddha diagnosed with the Four Noble Truths is to recognize the search for those kinds of ideas is part of the sickness and instead to simply and directly pay attention to reality. And this what the practice of anapanasati or mindfulness of the breath is for.

The breath is a touchstone, a point from which to begin to open past the states of contraction that compromise mind and body and hold it captive. We come back to the touchstone, we touch the breath without focusing on it, and immediately open attention to whole-bodily sensation and seeing and hearing without moving away from the sensations of the breath. And we do this breath after breath after breath. Touch, release, open all at the same time, all in the same breath.

States of mind can capture the breath. You can notice this when, for example, feeling anxious. The breath will sometimes become shortened, the sensations seem to tighten. Similarly with fear or anger or confusion, there can be an effect on the breath. And this is why it is so important to also feel into bodily sensation while feeling into the sensations of the breath. You're not going to notice that you are tensing or acting out a state with the body - as well as with the breath - unless you're feeling the whole body at the same time.

When you feel into the body and the breath together, all at the same time, all in the same breath, there is a kind of releasing that naturally occurs. What is being released is the cruft and fluff that accumulates when emotional and mental states are propagated. In releasing these states, you are freeing and opening the capacities of bodymind to see, smell, touch, taste, think and feel without interpretation.

The thoughts and feelings generated by states that come up are rather like ghosts flitting around a tombstone. Just flitting this way and that all around the tombstone. But the tombstone is reality. That's one of the Roshi's jokes and it's a really good one if you consider it for a moment. Heh. He means that reality is the death of self-image, the reality of the impermanence of even stones and the presencing of Suchness as everything you can touch and see and hear and experience.

And so that's not to say that all thinking is bad. There is nothing wrong at all with the capacity to think. But there is a difference between intelligent thought and just thinking about stuff. When we talk about releasing the thoughts and feelings, what we're really talking about is all the junk we waste swathes of time on. Intelligent thought is quite a different matter.

The capacity to think, for most people, is filled with the ceaseless mutterings of self-image. The ghosts flitting around the tombstone, nattering on about hope and fear. This is just having lots and lots of thoughts about stuff, usually very repetitive, echoing back to oneself what one already

knows. You can see this quite clearly when you're trying to think about something that has a lot of emotional weight for you, or when trying to make a decision you're anxious about. And in seeing it there are some details that you can also notice quite clearly, about how you think - the form it takes.

Some people think primarily in words, others think primarily in pictures, others may think in feeling tones and textures. We are all capable of all three of these and often there will be two or even all three running at the same time. Understanding this is useful because when you notice you are thinking in words, you can use the noticing of that as a reminder to open to what you are actually hearing with your ears instead of listening to what's going on inside your head. If you notice the thoughts are coming up as pictures, you can use the noticing of that as a reminder to open attention to what you are seeing with your eyes instead of following the internalized imagery of people and situations that are not at all accurate. If you notice that you're getting caught up in feeling tones and textures, you can use that as a reminder to open to whole bodily sensation - to feel the body instead of feeling the feeling tones.

Most people believe that the decisions about small and big things they have to make occur at the level of thoughts and feeling tones. That isn't actually true. The process of making a decision - about anything - can actually occur very quickly and one's thinking can be very clear. But what slows the process down, complicates and clouds it, is the habit of worrying it to death like a dog tearing up an old shoe. People tend to think and think and think about everything. They think about events that have already happened and why those events happened and what was going on with all of the people involved in those events. They think about what's going on right now and what that might mean about themselves or about other people or other situations that are affected by what is going on right now. And they think about the future and what might happen to them and what that might mean and how other people may behave and the effect that might have on everything else and on and on and on.

Junk.

All junk.

But why is it all junk?

Well that's very simple. What you have already experienced is now in the past. You were there when it happened. You experienced it. You've learned everything there was to learn about that stuff while it was happening. So if you start thinking about it now, all you are doing is echoing back to yourself what you already know and confusing yourself by weaving more and more interpretations into it.

What you are experiencing in the present is not going on inside of you and stands apart from anything you think or feel about it. In fact it has very, very little to do with you. To experience what

is going on in the present, you need to get out of the way and that means dropping the tendency to want to draw comparisons and associations and interpretations about it and following the habit of just reacting to it all. In short, what you need to do is shut up and pay attention and what IS going on will reveal itself. Everything is already telling the truth about itself and the only way you can confuse yourself about it is by following your own interpretations instead of paying attention to what is being presented to you.

And then there is the future. What will happen in the future isn't here yet. It hasn't happened. And whatever will happen will unfold in ways and to an extent that cannot be bound within your language, imagery, or feeling tones. The future is not science fiction. It is not fiction at all. It is a range of possibilities and probabilities that are nothing at all until they are no longer the future but are simply the present. So any thought about it that you may have is just more of the nattering of self-image lurching between hope and fear like a drunk with a knife.

So what we're talking about here is all of the thoughts you have ABOUT stuff. The junky thoughts. The thoughts generated by an addiction to generating thoughts. Making a grocery list involves intelligent thought. But thinking about a grocery list when you're sitting on a zafu and don't have a pen or paper is just having thoughts ABOUT making a list. Is there really anything you could think about while sitting that would fall into the category of intelligent thought? No. Because you're sitting and there's nothing you need to think about sitting. Sitting involves a kind of 'doing' or as the Roshi would say "doing not-doing" and that not-doing includes not indulging in that little stone you get off of talking to yourself. Getting lost in states and generating wave after wave of thoughts about the state is rather like being stoned.

That's why you need the touchstone of the breath. When you're under the influence (of a state) you need a way to begin to ground yourself in reality to wake up from it. So we come back to the breath, we touch the breath and the touchstone of the breath shows us what is true of this moment of experiencing. But we get so drunk on mental and emotional states that just feeling the breath is not enough. It needs to be felt together with the rest of the sensations of the body as well as opening to reality through seeing and hearing. If you just try to hang on to the breath as though it might save you, you'll get lost in thought again very quickly because you haven't opened attention enough to stay with reality.

Thoughts will come up while you are sitting, but as I've said, any thought that comes up while you are sitting is junk. It doesn't matter what it's about, how important or creative or intelligent or open or compelling it might seem -- it's junk.

There are a few kitchen sink matters, things that occur in the kitchen that a tenzo notices, that I'd like to tell you about concerning thoughts and thinking and how to clarify the way in which you are using that capacity.

You will be eating rice for lunch. So let's talk about washing rice.

When we wash rice, great care must be taken. Aside from dust and insect eggs, bits of husk and who knows what else, rice has a lot of chalk mixed into it, to prevent the grains from sticking together. That's why you can pour it out of the bag instead of having to handle bricks of rice. But chalk isn't good for you and it has a weird texture on the tongue. Some people find it actually upsets their stomach. So the rice needs to be washed well before it's cooked. At Dainen-ji we measure the rice, then tip it into a stainless steel mixing bowl, watching carefully as it is poured into the bowl to spot any pebbles that might have got mixed into it. We cover the rice with a generous amount of cold water and then gently stir it with one hand. You don't need to work it as though you were kneading bread - the simple action of gently moving the grain through the water is enough to loosen anything that needs to be washed away. The water turns a milky white and is poured off, being careful not to lose any of the grains of rice down the drain. This is repeated as many times as necessary until the water is only very slightly clouded. At that point it's not chalk that's turning the water cloudy but starch from the grain itself, which is harmless. It's then tipped into a mesh colander and we shake it to remove excess water before putting it into the pot or rice cooker.

When washing rice, you need to let the water do the work of washing the rice. If you knead it and rub it together with your hands you'll break the grain and ruin it. In your life, the choices and decisions you make don't require that you knead and mash your thoughts and feelings together to clarify anything. It's simpler than that. Let reality show you what needs to be done and how to do it. Let reality do the work by aligning with what is most true of your experiencing.

There is another, more classically Indian, metaphor about clarifying butter. To make clarified butter (ghee), unsalted butter is melted in a pot. As it warms, the milk solids rise to the surface and are skimmed off. The skimming takes a little time but at the end of the process one is left with a clear golden oil.

When you are trying to think about something, perhaps because you have to make a decision, a lot of thoughts will come up. Many of them will just bubble up out of feeling tones you have about the issue - fear, confusion, doubt and so forth. These thoughts and feeling tones are like the milk solids. Let them come up but keep releasing them. Just decide that for a period of time you're not going to settle on any of the thoughts. They're all junk. Each time you notice a thought, instead of giving it your attention, choose instead to open attention to the sensations and colours and forms - to where you are and what is actually going on around you. This is how you can release attention wherever you are, no matter what is going on. Now if you continue to do this for a time, what will happen is that the volume of thoughts will gradually lessen and perhaps just a few will begin to repeat. Keep skimming those off too. Not this, not that. Don't propagate any of them. They're all still junk. Continue to open around them. You'll want to follow the thoughts because that's your habit, but you can release them. And if you do this what will happen is that a much simpler understanding of the situation can begin to present itself.

Knowing is not the same thing as thinking. Knowing does not require crunching your attention into distorted patterns and internalized maps in order to understand something. Knowing, which we also refer to as Luminosity, is very, very different from thinking and thoughts. Attention following thoughts is like a drunk with a knife lurching about in the dark shadows trying to tell you what to do, while Knowing is more like the sun coming up over the horizon spreading light across a landscape so that you can see where you are, where you need to go and what you need to do.

Sitting is the best place and time to practise releasing the thoughts. Not this, not that. If anything seems to become the point, open attention past that. But you can practise this at other times too. You can learn to trust Awareness instead of hoping that you need to cram attention into your head to think your way through every situation you encounter. If you do that, you're only going to repeat old habits of thought and feeling again and again and again.

During this sitting and the next, and the next, there is nothing you need to think about. You have this precious time to practise, so please don't waste it. When the thoughts come up, practise like washing rice with water, like making ghee, by choosing to open attention to the breath, to bodily sensation, to seeing and hearing. Simply let the breath breathe.

The Touchstone 6: Not a Tourist

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, August 24th, 2013

The breath is always immediate, simple, direct. This is why it is the touchstone for mindfulness. It is something you can open to anywhere, at any time, for as long as you are breathing. It's not even really something you "do". The breath is already going on and all that is needed is for you to release attention from the ways in which it is usually bound, in patterns of contraction and recoil, and attention can just open to it. Simply. Directly.

And the touchstone of mindfulness of the breath is a path to greater and vaster simplicity. Let go not only of what attention seemed to be bound within. Let go not only of the habits of discursive thought and daydreams; let go also of the strategies of attention of being someone who is being mindful of the breath. Let it be just the breath breathing the breath, in just this moment. Let mindfulness be mindful.

If there is the sense that you are watching the breath from above it, from somewhere up behind the eyes viewing down, you've taken up the stance of an 'observer'. When this happens, you're not entering fully into your practice. The 'observer' has little discrimination. Watching is watching,

whether it's watching thoughts, watching feeling tones, watching theories, ideas, concepts, about this or that, watching the breath. It doesn't really matter to it what it's watching providing it gets to watch, because as long as it's just watching it doesn't have to really do anything. It doesn't have to take any responsibility, it doesn't have to engage in what is going on at all. It can seem to be quite removed from what is really going on, free to maintain whatever agendas it views as important while ignoring almost everything that is really going on around it. A tourist.

This is a quote from the Fukanzazengi: How Everyone Can Sit by Eihei Dogen zenji:

In this and all other worlds, in India or in China, every place is marked by the seal of Awake Awareness. Upholding the essence of this Way, devote yourself to zazen, completely do zazen. You might hear about ten thousand ways to practise but just be complete and sit. What's the point of giving up your seat to go wandering around in dusty lands and countries? Take a wrong step and you'll miss what's there.

You've got what you need, the treasure of this body and birth, so don't waste your time. Keep to this as the basis of the Way of Awake Awareness. Don't be attracted by just a spark from the flint. Anyway, your body is like dew on the grass, your life a flash of lightning; vain for a moment and then vanished in an instant.

You who are in this excellent Lineage of Zen, don't blindly grope only a part of the elephant or fear the true dragon. Put all of yourself into this Way which directly presents your own nature. Be grateful to those who have come before and have done what was to be done. Align yourself with the enlightenment of the Awakened Ones and take your place in this Samadhi-Lineage. Practice in this way and you'll be what they are. The doors of the treasure house will fall open for you to do with as you will.

We miss so much of our lives through being inattentive. As the Gokan No Ge, the traditional Five Remembrances Meal Chant, says, Delusions are many, attention wanders. No matter where you are, no matter the circumstances you find yourself in, if you are not attending to experiencing, if you are not questioning into the nature of experiencing, you are missing most of what is really going on.

A tourist doesn't gain real insight into the experiences of people living in other lands and countries. They skim the surface of experiencing, noticing only the coarsest details. People will often say they want to travel to this place or that because they want to experience a different culture. You can't experience a different culture unless you live within that culture for many years, forming relationships and interacting with people, speaking their language, eating their food, reading their books, listening to their music, engaging in all of the details within that culture to take on its characteristics so thoroughly that you know it inside out. That is understanding another culture. Anything else is just being a tourist.

Being a tourist in one's own life is one of the characteristics of self-image. Self-image is very concerned with how things appear to be so the most superficial details will tend to stand out. We learn to dress according to what we think is our 'part', we learn to speak our 'part', play our 'part', fit in. It's really not comfortable and we tend to complain a lot, but we don't really have any better ideas about how to go about it all so we go along with it. But if there is a glimmer of real questioning within all of this, eventually we may find ourselves sitting on a zafu, facing a blank white wall, coming back to the touchstone of the breath, in order to question further into what it is that we are really experiencing - past the expectations and associations and assumptions that make up so much of what we think of as 'our lives'.

When you come to the monastery to attend a sitting once a week as an associate student or perhaps a few times a week as a general student, it's easy to forget that practice isn't just about the round and a half of sitting you do in the Hatto or the Zendo. It's about the WHOLE of your life. What you see while sitting in zazen is how your attention tends to move towards and away from whatever is noticed - a thought, a feeling, someone on the other side of the room coughing; the sound of a bird, the breath, back to a thought, an itch, a reaction to the itch, a reaction to the reaction. And on and on. Attention waxes and wanes, closes down with contraction, opens, sinks, opens, sinks again and you fall asleep. And then you're wide awake, feeling the breath for a moment, then lost in thought. And so it goes, throughout the round just as it does all of the rest of the time, through all of your waking and sleeping hours. But the difference between what is going on when you are sitting zazen and what is going on for the rest of the hours in your day is that if you are making an effort in your practice, that effort is to be more intentional about how your attention is moving.

Now, when I say "that effort is to be more intentional about how your attention is moving" this doesn't mean that being intentional means directing, aiming or focusing attention. The intention that is needed is to release attention from exactly that directing, aiming and focusing you engage in most of the time. The intention is to release attention into reality, beginning with the simplicity of the breath. And by 'reality', in this context I mean simply something that is going on, something you can verify through your actual experience. You are breathing. That is unarguably true. So we start with something that is very simple and completely true. We come back to the touchstone of the breath as a starting point from which we can open to more of what is true of our experiencing. We are breathing, but we are also experiencing the sensations of the whole bodymind sitting. Those sensations are not something we make happen, they are already going on. All that we need to do is let go of continuously distracting ourselves with thoughts and feelings and release attention into the breath and the sensations of the body. The bodymind is also seeing. You can see the white of the wall. That is unarguably true. You are hearing the sound of my voice, the pauses between the words I speak.

These sensations, this breath, these sounds and colours and forms, the experience of the bodymind and the space in which the bodymind arises - this is your life. You are not a tourist,

visiting temporarily to have some kind of special experience. The practice of your life is the practise of whole bodymind in this moment, just as it is. You've heard the expression Progress into the ordinary? Well this is what it means.

Tourists like to watch other people's lives. They like to just pass through without having to do anything. They pick and choose the kind of experiences they think they want to have, living temporarily in a kind of bubble that floats above 'ordinary' life which allows them to watch what is going on and interact with it as little as possible.

This is just like the sense of being a watcher that can obstruct true mindfulness. It is like just being a tourist in the land of Zen.

A point of interest about the 'watcher' is that it likes to believe that it is being very subtle, very covert. It's as though it were back and away from what is going on, off at a safe distance from which it can observe and generate various judgments and notions about what seems to be going on. All by itself, all very secretive. Sometimes people will refer to the movements of contracted attention that are really what this observer is, as their "innermost thoughts and feelings".

But through the process of mindfulness practice, one begins to realize that in fact there is no 'inside' or 'outside' and the appearance of a secretive "self" or "me" who is at the center of experience watching and making judgments is nothing more than the self-image attempting to set itself up as a 'knower', a voyeur, a tourist just passing through, who watches, makes judgments, but never really engages in anything that is actually going on. Because it doesn't really consider itself part of what is going on.

Now sometimes the observer will show up as that thing that seems to be looking over your shoulder making judgments about everything you do. "You shouldn't have said that, you sound like an idiot". Sometimes it will do replays of events that occurred previously, echoing them back to you over and over again, re-writing what you should have said or should have done. It likes to pretend it's much more intelligent than the rest of you is, much more worldly. But it's only AFTER the fact that it has anything to say. And that is a dead give-away. There's actually nobody inside of that thing that's doing the observing, no entity that is more intelligent or more knowing than you are the rest of the time.

For many people, taking up the contracted stance of an 'observer' is so habitual that they don't realize they are doing this most of the time. It comes up in dokusan, daisan and practice interviews with students quite frequently. An extreme example of this would be when a student is facing the Teacher or a practice advisor waiting for some kind of 'big' experience. Like a tourist waiting to be entertained.

I was an associate student when I first started having dokusan with the Roshi and I used to get into quite a lot of this in the beginning. I used to sit opposite him and as he spoke I would be

coming up with all kinds of thoughts and opinions about what he was saying and how he was saying it and what it all meant about me and how I felt about it, whether I agreed with it, how it fit into what I thought I already understood, and on and on and on. All from up behind the eyes, in 'secret'.

What I didn't realize at first was that he was seeing all of this.

I don't mean that he was reading my mind or anything like that. Reading other people's minds even if it were possible would be very rude so he wouldn't do that. No, it was simply that he could see how my attention was. When attention is more open that is quite obvious. When it is contracted, that is quite obvious. Different kinds of contraction generate different kinds of textures that can be felt. And how a student responds or doesn't respond shows quite clearly how willing they are to be exposed to and by the process of practice. Again and again and in so many ways the Roshi invited me to come out from my hiding places to meet with him and receive the Dharma. In some of my other Dharma Talks I've provided a few glimpses of exchanges I've had with the Roshi. Sometimes they were very uncomfortable; sometimes he could be quite fierce; sometimes very kind; but always in speech and action, through example, what I was being shown was the Dharma. I remember on one occasion a particularly snippy comment I made, which was I'm not learning anything. The Roshi responded simply by saying I am Teaching you, moment after moment in how I am. Pay attention.

The great debt of gratitude I owe my Teacher can never be repaid.

When you are called for daisan or a practice interview, the first question you are usually asked is How is your practice? This is first and foremost a reminder to practice, to really make use of the opportunity to meet with a monastic. A practice interview or daisan is meeting with the mind of practice. So it is about speaking from your practice, about your practice. Other topics may come up about your life or your activities outside of the monastery, but these are only relevant at all if the reason you are bringing them up is to clarify how you can practise with them. If you bring up something like your relationship with your husband/wife/girlfriend/boyfriend or work concerns or health concerns or the state of the universe, there is nothing a monastic really has to say about any of this unless you are speaking about it from the mind of practice, with the intention to practice with the reactivity that comes up about it. It's important to understand that your practice is your life. Your life is not your practice, not unless you're practising with it. Difficulties you may experience in your life would be going on whether you were practising or not. They don't come up because you're practising. And what a Dharma Teacher or practice advisor can offer you in the way of advice about these is to really allow mindfulness to inform your decisions; to practise as continuously as possible. That is what we do; that is what we are trained to do; that is what we are here for and that is what we have to offer you.

In the teisho series, *Entering Completely: Commentaries on Bodhidharma's "Two Entries and Four Practices"* by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi:

A thought comes up, and we think that we have thought it, even though we don't know where that thought has come from, or where it goes. We pretend that we have thought the thought. We pretend that we are the thinker. And we are coloured by the contents of that thought, as we propagate the next thought, and the next thought, and the next thought, and continue this game of dancing around pretending that we are the thinker, pretending that we are the contents of the thoughts. We bind our experiences together into lumps and heaps, into piles of junk.

We get up in the morning, and once we get over that moment of panic of the first opening our eyes and realizing that there's a world there, and we collect together all of our thoughts and feelings for the day. We start to ramble around inside of our head, feeling a grudge about this, feeling anxious about that. We wake up in our usual bed, in our usual way, get out of bed into our usual room, and wander around through our usual world for the day, looking for some kind of satisfaction someplace, something interesting to happen to cut through this usualness, this pettiness. Desperately searching for something to make us happy, or at least give us some sense of being alive.

And yet, things are not bound together, nor are you tied. Sounds come and go. Thoughts come and go. The world comes and goes over and over and over again. When a thought comes up it is instantly gone. It is impossible for you to hold onto a thought. It is impossible for you to hold on to a sound. It is impossible to find any place to hold on, let alone to be able to pile things up in ugly heaps.

The world is not usual. The world is amazing. The world exerts itself as world, simply for the fun of it. In our search for something to make us happy, we pass over this basic joyfulness that is existence. And so the reason it is not manifest is only due to being wrapped in external objects and deluded views. We have a deluded view if we think that the world is the same moment after moment. We have a deluded view if we think that we can hold onto anything. We have a deluded view if we think that we are anything at all. We have a deluded view if we believe in time and space and body and mind and self and other. We have a deluded view if we think that we have to become Buddha. We have a deluded view if we think that we are not Buddha. We wrap ourselves in external objects when we hope that something will make us happy. Wrapping ourselves in external objects does not just mean collecting cars, and houses, and mink coats. Giving up wrapping ourselves in external objects is not as easy as selling your property and going off to live in a cave. Ceasing to wrap oneself in external objects means to come out into the open, to stop hiding, and to come out and play.

Practise the simplicity and honesty of opening attention to things just as they are. Release the strategies self-image entangles you in by coming back to the touchstone of the breath. Do this as much as you are able while sitting in zazen and then follow through and practise mindful speech while meeting with monastics in daisan and interviews. And beyond that, practise this simplicity as

often as possible the rest of the time too. You're not a tourist in your life or in the monastery or in your practice and this is not some 'spiffy Zen thing' you do now and then. This practice IS the practice of your life as it really is, beyond your ideas and interpretations about it. And as the Roshi would say, Please, enjoy yourself.

## The Touchstone 7: Faster Than the Speed of Thoughts

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, October 19th, 2013

When you come back to the touchstone of the breath, in the moment of really coming back and allowing yourself to open to the sensations, there is a change in perception. The degree to which you'll experience this will depend on how your attention is arranged in that moment and was prior to feeling the breath. But whether subtle or obvious, however you experience it, there is a shift in perception and there is a direct relationship between that shift and opening attention to the sensations of the breath and body. It might be just a split-second flash of recognition, or it may be as pronounced as would be the experience of seeing the world in three dimensions when previously you were seeing it only in two, as though it were a flat photograph. There is a depth, a breadth, a sense of spaciousness in feeling the breath and body that in contrast to the claustrophobic folding in of thoughts and feelings is unmistakable.

We begin by coming back to the touchstone of the breath, but we also feel into the sensations of the rest of the body. If you also feel into the sensations of the whole body, without leaving the breath but instead feeling into breath and the rest of bodily sensation at the same time, the experience of spaciousness, of ease, of there being room within experiencing for anything that is going on or anything that might come up, becomes even more obvious because the real process of practice is a process of opening that continues to unfold into further openness.

It's not either/or -- feel the breath OR feel the body. In some traditions of Buddhist practice teachers instruct students to feel the breath. And that's good. However, in our practice of Dogen's Zen, the emphasis is on feeling the breath TOGETHER with opening attention to whole bodily sensation at the same time. It's not enough to just feel the breath and it's not enough to just feel the hands and feet and legs and arms. Or to move attention from one thing and then another. You need to feel into the sensations of the breath and at the same time, in the same breath feel into the sensations of the whole bodymind - top to bottom, front to back, all at the same time.

Why? Well, because they are all going on at the same time in the first place. The question is not why you should feel all of these sensations all together but why you were not feeling them all

together. Attention becomes directed and focussed into interpretations and thoughts. Directing and focussing attention towards something other than thoughts, such as the breath alone or the seeing alone or the hearing alone, or the feet alone, or the hands alone, or the knees alone, or the back alone, or the elbows alone is all just more focussing and tunneling of our experience.

The Straight Path of the Buddha's mindfulness is a journey of the whole bodymind from dukkha and contraction into release and sukkha. This is what all of our Awakened Ancestors have realized and practised as the Shobo or Complete Dharma.

And so we practice with the breath, with the seeing, with the hands and feet, the elbows and knees, the belly and the back, all together and whole in this whole moment.

And practise this with the next breath, and the next in the next moment, and the next.

Breath, bodymind, the world, all that you are experiencing arises together, at the same time, so why would your practice occur in stages? When this seems to be the case, it is because you are shuttling attention from one thing to another instead of allowing it to simply fall open.

You don't need to direct attention. In fact, you really can't direct attention. All you can do is make things absurdly complicated. But we are masterful at making things complicated so we should talk about what to do when you find you've done just that.

What you can do is just drop everything you think you're doing for a moment, even the idea of being 'mindful' because that's not mindfulness. Pay attention to the simplest of details. If you're sitting down, feel the bodymind sitting down. If you're standing, feel the bodymind standing. Open attention to the space around you. Where are you? In a room? Outside? How do you know where you are? Well, you know where you are because you can see the space around you and you can hear it. You can also feel such things as temperature, air currents; you can smell whatever scents there might be in the environment. And if you do just this what you are experiencing is a kind of honesty and simplicity that is close to mindfulness.

Mindfulness is not a technique or a strategy. It's not a kind of state or a mood. Mindfulness is an activity and that activity involves simultaneously opening and releasing. What you are opening to is the details of present experiencing. What you are releasing is fixation and focussing. Opening and releasing are not separate from each other. To open you need to release; to release you need to open. Releasing and opening move together like the ocean and the waves of the ocean. There is nowhere in the ocean you can point to, to say "this is where the wave ends and the ocean begins" or "this is where the ocean ends and this is where the wave begins". In our practice, opening and releasing are a ceaseless movement that occur simultaneously. Although we can use two words to describe the movement, the words are not what it is.

You can't experience experience by labeling it, or by thinking about it. You can only experience

experience by experiencing it. Each time you come back to the touchstone of the breath you can experience opening and releasing. You can use the touchstone as a place from which you can begin to release the ways in which attention has narrowed and congealed. Each time you come back to the touchstone of the breath you are simultaneously opening and releasing attention into the sensations of the whole body and the colours and forms and sounds.

It's rather like choosing between viewing your life as a flat photograph or being able to see what is in three dimensions. Once you begin to understand the difference, you will find yourself more often choosing the wider, and more accurate view of course. The narrower, flat-photograph view leaves out more information than it provides and when information is missing the chance of misunderstanding what is really going on increases dramatically.

The reason I chose the metaphor of a flat photograph to describe the mutterings of self-image is because there is a flatness to it. The cartoon-like images of other people or situations that decorate your thoughts are very inaccurate, very flat representations of how they actually are. The statements you make to yourself are not true to life, they have no nuance. They too are flat. Self-image, as a process of contraction, will make use of bits and pieces of reality to shore itself up, to prove itself right or worthy or intelligent, but it's really just reducing the view to tattered photographs that it can obsess over and be reactive about.

We spend much of our time losing ourselves in the push and pull of reactivity. We are reactive about our circumstances, about what goes on around us, about our own thoughts. Who we think we are, who other people think we are, how they respond to us, how we respond to them, fills us with a kind of habitual anxiety. One moment we are completely lost in thought, swept away by some storyline of hope or fear; and in the next moment we are desperately trying to control how we are, to put our best face forward whether that so-called-face is the face we like to imagine in the privacy of our thoughts or the face we wear when walking into a room to speak to someone. The face in the photograph. You know, the photograph we invented but that really doesn't exist.

Coming back to the touchstone of the breath is not a way of forming yet another argument to counter the countless arguments we already have with ourselves about how we should be or how anything else should be. Coming back to the breath stands outside of all of our accounting and equations and internalized maps about what everything is. As attention begins to open to the touchstone of the breath, there is the possibility of releasing of the structures of attention that form the framework of how our perceptions are arranged and bind them together - the same structures of attention that make up our views and attitudes towards ourselves and everything else.

It's not a matter of distracting yourself from thinking by directing your attention to the breath. Nor is it a matter of rearranging yourself in some way. It is touching something that is true, something that is going on right now that isn't of your invention. For a moment you stop lying to yourself quite as convincingly. For a moment a crack appears in the storylines. But as I mentioned previously it's not enough to just cling to the touchstone. You need to touch and then let go by releasing

attention further into the breath and the sensations of the rest of the bodymind. And further still by releasing attention into the breath, the sensations of the whole bodymind as well as seeing and hearing. All together, all at the same time.

If there are thoughts, you don't need to wait until the thoughts go away so that you can begin to practise. Begin in the midst of the thoughts. Continue in the midst of the thoughts. Open attention to as many details as possible - details of bodily experiencing as well as practising environmental mindfulness. The thoughts might continue through this, but they are not obstructing anything. They are just details that can be noticed, but there is no need to move attention toward them. The very fact that you are noticing means they've already been given enough attention. What you need to do is give them context and the context is the space in which they are occurring. They are occurring within the context of whole bodily sensation, the space of the room, the space of seeing and hearing. If the thoughts are allowed to completely eclipse sensations, seeing, hearing, why is that? It is because you've agreed to let attention fold in on itself.

It isn't necessary to think about anything while you are practising zazen, but thoughts will naturally arise and fall. The deeper that your practice is, the less that thoughts condense into anything with words, images, or feeling-tones; instead they are movements of meanings. But this is only so for students who practice deeply as monastics and deshi with not only a very full schedule of formal practice but are engaged in gyoji, continuous practice. So, in general, let's face it - you are going to start thinking about stuff. There are times, and sometimes long stretches of time, during which you become very passive. You let yourself be stupid because it's easier. But you're not stupid because you do, in fact, know that you are doing this.

So instead of taking the approach that says that you have to label thoughts or make thoughts disappear so you can sit in a nice quiet little bubble before you can practice, what you can do is practise with the thoughts that come up. They are, after all, something you are experiencing. The problem is that you make them the most important thing you are experiencing when in reality they are one of the least important things you are experiencing. You're not going to learn anything new from them because....they are your thoughts. You already know everything that's in them. But people are addicted not just to thinking, but the whole process that gives rise to thinking as well as the content. Sometimes it's gossipy, sometimes it's (ahem) creative, sometimes furious, sometimes self-pitying and sometimes completely insane with a slightly comedic twist performed by the worst comic in existence that only they find funny. People love their thoughts. Even when you protest about them and say that you wish they would stop, you're loving it. Because even your protesting is more thinking.

But you don't get off the hook that easily because the truth of the matter is that it doesn't matter how peaceful or noisy your mind seems to be, you still need to feel the breath, open to bodily sensation and seeing and hearing and nothing else is going to cut it. Why? All of the living details of the breath, bodily feeling, seeing and hearing are all actually going on and if you are not open to them then you are avoiding your own life. You are lying to yourself. And if you try to justify that to a

Dharma Teacher then you are trying to lie to the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors.

And the truth is: you can do this, no matter how much you might protest that you can't -- because remember, all that protesting is just you getting all tricky finding another way to feed your addiction to sit there and think about shit.

Feeling into the touchstone of the breath is faster than any thought you could possibly come up with. Opening to whole-bodily sensation together with the breath brings your two-dimensional self-created view into three dimensions, in technicolour, with surround sound. There is simply no way to compare the pixel density of the best video screen to the countless colours and numberless details of actually seeing. Do you really want to argue with me that that little fart-in-a-treetop line of thinking you get so invested in is worth your forgoing that? I don't think so. In fact, almost every thought that you get invested in and lose the vividness of your life in is almost immediately forgotten by the time you get lost in the next thought. Do you remember what you were thinking about when you got lost in thought on Wednesday? Or Thursday? Or Friday? Or this morning?

Remember, Zen practise isn't just about your practice on a zafu. It's all the time, because as long as we are alive, we are alive all the time. You practice on a zafu facing a blank white wall because your attention is in such a mess you don't know how to attend very well. So you're given absolutely simple conditions to practise in with a minimum of distraction. And although you might find it all rather boring, what is happening as you apply the instructions is that your attention is getting stronger. And stronger. And clearer. You're learning to distinguish between a lie (meaning most of the content of your thoughts) and what is actually being experienced. How can you tell if you are lying to yourself or someone else is lying to you when you don't know the difference between something you're actually seeing - i.e. the wall - and believing the imaginings you have going on in your head about yourself or other people? I truly cannot think of a better skill to have than the ability to distinguish quickly and clearly between what is false and what is true. And of course that's just ONE of the skills that practising zazen will teach you. The thousand arms of Avalokitesvara bodhisattva represent only a fraction of the possibilities of upaya or skillful means, the activity of wisdom.

And so when you get up from your zafu, you're not done. As I mentioned previously, self-image is an addict and grasp after highs from anything you weave attention into. So it is very important that you continue your practice, during kinhin, during kata, as you walk down the stairs and out of the building; as you make your way home and while you are at home. With everything you do. If you are sweeping the floor, practise while sweeping the floor. Are you really sweeping or are you 'multi-tasking' - moving the broom around while you watch home movies in your head? While you're eating lunch, washing the dishes, standing in the bank line, anywhere, all the time, you can make the choice to open attention or to fold down into nonsensical day-dreams.

Are you only practising when something 'big' jogs you into remembering to? Like the sight of an expanse of water, or the sound of wind, or perhaps noticing you're in a particularly nasty state and

don't want to feel that way, so you remember to practise because maybe you can manipulate it, turn it into something else like a feeeeling of openness. That's not openness.

Opening is opening attention by coming back to the touchstone of the breath, by coming back to bodily sensation, to seeing, to hearing. It's not just some memory of having been mindful at some point in the past that you can slosh over yourself now. It's not a feeling about yourself that you can have. It's not a discursive thought about mindfulness. It's something that you actually do.

In coming back to the touchstone of the breath, come out to the whole moment with the whole bodymind. This is where the jewel of your real life really is.

## The Touchstone 8: The Nobility of the Truth

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, January 25, 2014

Feeling into the touchstone of the breath, as with all other aspects of our practice, is always actually about seeing how our attention is.

When people first begin practising they are often quite shocked at seeing how often and unpredictably attention drifts and sinks, becomes fragmented into the range of states they experience, and the volume of thoughts those states seem to generate. It's not that the states or the thoughts were not there before, it's just that through practising mindfulness, one is able to see them more clearly.

Someone asked me, not long ago, if practising mindfulness could deepen the states they experience and cause them to become even more contracted than they were before they started practising. No, not if you are following the instructions at all. But you would experience the contraction, the actual density of the state, more clearly. And you would be less able to fool yourself about whether it is "good for you" or not.

And that is actually at the root of that question: Although it presents itself as being fearful of Zen practice and looking to blame Zen for the painfulness of contraction, that's just how self-image tried to warp and corrupt what grew from the root. The root is the recognition that contraction hurts, that it is dukkha, or suffering, which is the First of the Buddha's Four Noble Truths. The Second is that this dukkha has a cause, and that too is there: the cause of dukkha is contraction or grasping of attention. The Third Noble Truth is that, just as the dukka has a cause it can also have an end. The Fourth Noble Truth is that there is a way to do this and that way is the path of the

practise of mindfulness and insight through zazen.

Whether you are sitting for 30 minutes once a week or 30 minutes a day, every day, the instructions are the same. Attend to the sensations of the breath at the diaphragm and the tanden; attend to the sensations of the posture as a whole; attend to seeing and hearing. Attend to the details of present experiencing by opening to the sense fields.

Thoughts or feeling tones will continue to come up out of sheer habit. But it becomes clearer and clearer to the practitioner that there is a huge difference between what is actually going on and whatever version of reality they are fabricating and that they need to make the choice to open to reality and do that again and again and again, countless times within even a single sitting round.

Each half-hour round you sit zazen must be dedicated to actually sitting zazen.

Za means "sitting"; Zen means "practice"; Zazen means "sitting practice". The instructions are clear: Practise sitting. Practise opening to whole bodily sensation, mindfulness of the space in which you are sitting (the room around you); practise where you are and what is actually going on in this moment. It is NOT a time to talk to yourself about your theories about yourself or other people or what you think of as your life. It is not a time to figure stuff out or wallow in feeling tones of poverty or despair or anger. It is not a time to lose your mind in so-called "inspiration". It's time to sit zazen and follow the instructions.

If you make the choice to attend to the details of present experiencing, to open to this moment, you will begin to see how attention moves toward and away from whatever is noticed. When attention moves towards something it does this by narrowing and focusing. When it moves away from something it does that by ignoring and recoiling.

When you fall into a state and really identify with it, it is because your attention has become so narrowed and focused that you've made a feeling-tone or a storyline or something you are reacting to the point of your experiencing. It seems to be most or all of what is going on. It's a very strange thing, really, because you would think that when we feel so completely sure, so definite, about something it would occur to us to question what that feeling of certainty really is. But it doesn't. Instead, attention clenches and locks onto something and we become convinced that the clenching means something solid and true and certain. We get so caught up in the content of a state and the feelings it generates for us that we forget completely that any state, any thought, any feeling, is always arising within a larger context and unless we are opening to a larger context, anything we believe about ourselves or other people or situations is going to be skewed.

In a series of classes presented by Anzan Hoshin roshi in the late 1980s, entitled The Development of Buddhist Psychology, the Roshi explains for us the traditional meanings of the terms applied to states from about two and a half thousand years ago. He says:

The Dhammasangani, the "enumeration of the dhammas", is the first volume of the pitaka, and begins by classifying mental states into "kusala" and "akusala". "Kusala" has been translated in many ways: good, pure, or wholesome; "akusala", literally "not kusala", has been translated as bad, evil or unwholesome. These translations derive not from only the translators' penchants and predispositions but also reflect nuances in the tradition. Whereas it is often common in Western contemporary Dharma to view "akusala" as "unwholesome" rather than "evil", the basic connotation in the classical texts is often that certain mental states and certain things are inherently evil, and, in fact, that anything which is impermanent and compounded (and everything is) is the cause of suffering and thus evil.

What makes a mental state or anything else "wholesome" or "unwholesome" is how it is related to. Anger, for example, is regarded as "akusala". If anger is identified with and acted out, then harm comes to oneself and others and this certainly is not wholesome. However, if anger is attended to with mindfulness and insight, then it helps to deepen one's practice and has given one a measure of greater freedom. Thus something that is unwholesome can become wholesome. As well, if the energy of anger is known without judgement, identification, or avoidance but is simply attended to openly, then the gathering of factors (such as the tightening of muscles, the postural configuration, tightness of breath, focusing and contraction of the senses and sensory fields, thoughts, and so on) which is conventionally understood to be "anger" is disengaged from the factors which make it "anger", then anger is no longer anger. It has not been rejected, suppressed, acted out, or denied but has been opened through direct insight. The energy of anger thus becomes available as simply energy, which can then be applied as strength, determination, or whatever is appropriate. This way of working with states is not characteristic of the Hinayana or Abhidhammic approach although it has developed from their consideration of each thing being a gathering or compounding of many other things. The Hinayana approach would be to simply cut off the state.

If we approach certain elements of our experience as if they were inherently "evil", they are then no longer available to us as tools for greater clarity. When I teach, I emphasize the quality of attention, the process of the occurrence, rather than the content, and so kusala would be a moment of open attention, akusala would be contracted attention. Defining something as unwholesome or evil or bad as such reifies and objectifies it. As well, our basic tendency seems to be to want to read a list of good things and bad things about ourselves so that we can know what not to let show.

A practical example of this might be that of anger - a state that comes up all the time, even about small things, and it can be "neutral", "wholesome", or "unwholesome". An example of "neutral" anger might be dropping a pencil on the floor and realizing you have to pick it up. The silent "Oh damn!" that comes up is not harmful, it's just a little flaring of energy. As long as it's not propagated and weighs upon whatever event follows.

An example of "wholesome anger" might be the burst of energy that arises that allows you to drag a small child out of the way of an oncoming bus.

An example of "unwholesome anger" might be getting into a real state, letting someone have it in a way that is harmful to them (and harm can take place in many ways), and then thinking "There! I'm glad I did that". Not good.

Anger that comes up and is vented on others is not wholesome. It presupposes that there is a "self" and there is an "other" towards whom the anger is directed. This is why we need to practise opening around it. If there is a sense of "self" underlying the anger (and there almost always is), then real communication with another person is not possible because we have taken up a stance towards them that cuts off any possibility of meeting them where we and they are most human.

When anger is practised with, the energy of it can open and when it opens, it can become a kind of clarity and determination that has no "edge" to it. When this happens, we can be more intelligent about the situation and it is often possible to see ways of responding, actions that can be taken, that would not normally occur to us. So in this way, anger can become very useful. Left to its own devices, though, it will just cause further difficulty. As Roshi often says, Contraction only leads to further contraction.

And this is precisely why you should come back to the touchstone of the breath whenever you notice anything about how you seem to be - angry, sad, confused, anxious, tired, sick, happy, enthusiastic, energetic -- whatever it is that seems to become dominant in your experiencing needs to be open to question. Feeling into the touchstone of the breath when you're really angry at someone might seem to be incredibly inconvenient and an unwanted interruption, but that just shows you how vitally important it is that you DO feel into the sensations of the breath, open to bodily sensation and seeing and hearing. It's very simple, really. If any state you are experiencing cannot be open to colours and forms and sounds and sensations, what does that say about the state?

Sometimes students will notice something about how they are, some state or some way in which they have behaved, and they will say something along the lines of, "My self-image was very strong today". Which makes it sound like we have some kind of ghostly entity living inside of us that misbehaves and overpowers us.

The thing to understand about this is that the thing that seems to be watching self-image -- that is ALSO self-image.

So what's the relationship between self-image and attention again? Well, that's exactly what we have been discussing. So, first off, there is no such thing as self-image. It's an illusion. And it is an illusion formed out of the contraction of attention into a 'knower'. The structures of attention that give rise to self-image are what we need to be able to notice in order to release them.

I know that there can be a bit of a problem with that phrase "seeing how our attention is" because

that can be misconstrued to mean that one should 'watch' attention -- as though one were somehow separate from it and could watch it. Which makes no sense at all. So let's look at what is meant by the word "attention" and then we'll go into what's meant by "the seeing of it" and why that is important.

The Roshi defined the word "attention" in *Painted Cakes: a Zen Dictionary*, as this: When directed towards or away from an experience, this is the primary mechanism of delusion. When clarified of fickleness, distraction, and sinking, it refers to mindfulness without the need to apply effort.

Attention can move towards and away from whatever it attends to. It can move towards an object, toward a thought, a feeling, a state, a sound. And it can move away from any of these by ignoring details or distracting itself from whatever might be noticed. But mind and body are not separate so these movements towards and away from what is noticed affect the whole of the bodymind. You can see this in a very simple and direct way when sitting zazen. If attention is leaning into a state, you are not sitting straight. If attention folds down or becomes narrowed and congealed, the bodymind will begin to slouch or tighten.

If attention can move toward and away from an experience, how then does this become the primary mechanism of delusion? If you move attention toward an experience (and focus on it) or move attention away from an experience (by ignoring), both of these will just create distortion. You are either viewing whatever it is that is noticed as being far more important than it really is or far less important than it really is. It's rather like changing the magnification of a lens you're viewing the world through. You're not seeing it as it is, relative to everything around it -- you're making it larger or smaller, according to your own agenda. You are distorting reality and thereby deluding yourself. And this is THE most common way you cause delusion for yourself and for those around you.

Seeing how your attention is in this moment is not falling into how you usually tend to be but it is also not something you do by stepping forward or backward or to the sides from what is going on. See how your attention is with the breath, with the mudra, with the knees. with the wall, with the sounds, with the right elbow and left elbow and the belly and the back, in this moment.

Practise the nobility of this moment, the truth of this moment, and be the Buddha of this moment.

You are not your thoughts or feelings. You can never be any of the thoughts or feelings you experience because no thought or feeling can be what your life is. Thoughts and feelings arise within your life, as a coming and going of reactions to what is being experienced. Thoughts and feelings bind together as views - of yourself and of the world. And although the view keeps changing, you can still convince yourself that THIS view is THE view. THIS is how it really is. THIS is what's really going on.

The ways in which we know tend to be based upon habituality and limitation, upon what we have already known. The binding together of thoughts and feelings and reactions into what I am referring to as "views", is the result of the activity of the five skandhas, or in Sanskrit, the *panca upadanaskhanda*, the five binding groups.

The five skandhas, or the five maha-bhutas, which describe the piling up of mental factors, are rupa (form), vedana (basic reactivity), samjna (symbolization), sankhara (habitual patterning), and vijnana (consciousness). The five skandhas are compulsive and occur through glossing over the details of experiencing: not noticing that a thought arises, dwells and decays; not hearing how a sound is actually heard. So the five skandhas refers to how experiencing is conditioned rather than to how Knowing shows itself as what is known.

Because we focus on the known, we don't understand how the known is known. We do not understand what Knowing is. And because we do not understand what Knowing is, we presume that there is a knower.

Now, let's pause here for a moment and just feel the breath at the diaphragm. Feel into the sensations at the tanden. Just feel that area, without making it move. It isn't linked to respiration, it has its own sensations. It's right where the blades, or the 'edges' of the hands in the mudra contact the lower belly so it's easy to feel. But it's down at the belly so feeling the tanden can help to ground or balance the tendency or habit to try to feel downwards and outwards from the head, from behind the eyes. Open to the sensations of the whole body sitting on the zafu. Open to seeing and hearing. Release any thoughts or feelings into the sensations and colours and forms and sounds.

Any thought that comes up is a known. Any feeling that comes up is a known. That is not what we are practising. What we are practising is knowing, which includes the knowing of thoughts and feelings but is not about them. However, thoughts and feelings tend to be quite sticky, so it is important to begin to question into the processes that give rise to them instead of just being caught up in the content. It might seem, at first, that just by magic, without any reason you can see, you get lost in a storyline or a feeling-tone. But once you see the mechanisms that create them and perpetuate them, they become much less of a mystery, much less 'sticky'. I have spoken about practising with thoughts in previous talks in this series, but not a lot has been said about feelings and feeling-tones so we will go into this a little.

Beginning students find the way we use the terms "feeling" and "feeling-tone" to be a bit confusing.

The word "feeling" as a verb, refers to feeling into the sensations of the body. The sensations of the hand, for example, are felt by the hand. Only the hand can feel the hand; it does not require that you "think" about the sensations, but instead that you feel into them. In feeling into them it can be noticed that some sensations stand out; others are more subtle, but the sensations are not separate from one another - the hand is not separate from the wrist; the wrist is not separate from the arm. And so the more that we practice opening to the sensations of the breath, the tanden, feeling into the sensations of the rest of the body, the more we find that each sensation opens out into every other sensation and so we can learn to feel the whole body simultaneously. And that is the point - to feel whole-bodily, to feel all of the sensations of the body, all at the same time, all in the same breath, rather than as bits and pieces.

The word "feelings" as a noun is different. Feelings are not really directed towards anything when they first come up. They are simply an acknowledgement of something that is going on. Not how we "feel" about what is going on, but acknowledging that it is happening. For example, a feeling of grief may come up as an honest and direct acknowledgement of the fact that someone we know is gone. It does not require thoughts about it, does not require us to move attention towards a thought or a feeling about that. It is simply there as an acknowledgement of something that is true and is already being felt, simply and directly, without commentary, without storylines, without any kind of embellishment. But if we begin to focus on a feeling, give it too much attention it will begin to distort into what we refer to as "feeling-tones".

Feeling-tones are distortions or misinterpretations of feeling that come about through turning attention to a feeling and propagating it. Feeling-tones condition or "colour" our experiencing. For example, when we are sitting feelings frequently come up as an acknowledgement of what we are experiencing while sitting. We are practising opening attention and so perhaps a subtle feeling of anticipation springs up simply because we are acknowledging that we do not know what our experiencing might be in the next moment, what we will notice. There is just a brightness and freshness to things because we are paying attention to what is going on and the feeling is not really about anything specific, is not directed towards anything. If attention begins to move towards that subtle feeling of anticipation and focuses on it, then we begin to propagate it by giving it too much attention. The word "propagate" comes from the Sanskrit word, "prapancha", which means "five times too many". Giving the original feeling too much attention will cause it to distort and it may begin to take the form of perhaps a kind of grasping - wanting to know what it is that we are anticipating. If we continue to propagate, a feeling of unsatisfactoriness can begin to form because we want to know what is coming up before it comes up. The more we propagate, the more feeling-tones we generate about our experiencing and in a very short time we can go from a simple feeling of anticipation, to a feeling-tone of unsatisfactoriness to a feeling-tone of confusion. This is just an example of how a feeling-tone can move from one view of things to another, to another, in

a short space of time.

Feeling-tones, as I mention, colour or set the tone for how we are experiencing things. They have an "environmental quality" to them. From the feeling-tone, thoughts begin to spring up to justify or explain the feeling-tone. And so we might start talking to ourselves about how we want to have some kind of "break-through" in our practice so that we know we are "progressing" and perhaps how hard we've tried to do the practice and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. As we continue to propagate these thoughts, they generate more feeling-tones, which generate more thoughts, which generates more feeling-tones and a loop begins to form.

States of mind are not separate from states of body, so the more that we do this, the more we will tend to act out states with the body. If there is a feeling-tone present that is perhaps about anger, we will act that out with the body and so the breath might become tight and constricted; the shoulders may rise; the jaw clenches; the facial muscles tighten; the thumbs, held in the mudra may begin to push against one another. If there is a feeling-tone present that is about sadness, the shoulders may become rounded, the chest becomes somewhat concave; we begin to sigh; the mudra collapses. We habitually act out states with the body during our waking hours and even when we are sleeping and dreaming.

However, when we are sitting, we don't do this. We let the body sit as body. Regardless of whatever feelings or feeling-tones or thoughts there are that come up, we stay in posture and refrain from acting them out. Instead of acting them out or propagating them, we use the noticing of them as a reminder to re-initiate our practice - to open to whole-bodily sensation, the colours and forms and sounds.

Most of what people describe as "feelings" are not actually feelings, they are feeling-tones. Most of us are thoroughly addicted to feeling-tones and to such a degree that there is a continuous flow of them. We also swap feeling-tones all day long with other people and help one another to propagate them. I am sure you have had the experience of going to work feeling just fine, encountering someone, having a brief conversation with them, and for the rest of the morning feeling unsettled or confused or angry etc.

Sometimes another kind of confusion comes up for people that isn't so much about whatever feelings there are that might seem to presence, but rather that they don't seem to be feeling anything at all. This can come up so strongly that they wonder if there isn't something wrong with them, if perhaps they are "dead inside". When this perception is present, we believe that it is due to an "absence" of feeling, when in actual fact what we are experiencing is a presencing of something - a feeling-tone that registers as "absence". If you are noticing that feeling-tone, it is because you are feeling it, so, in fact, it is not true that you are not feeling anything - you are feeling something that you are calling the absence of feeling. What came before that may have been any number of actual feelings that were not about anything in particular, just acknowledgments about what was actually going on - perhaps noticing that one was sitting in a

room and there was nothing going on. There isn't really anything to think about while sitting, or to have feeling-tones about. It's quiet, open, spacious. There are sensations and colours and forms and sounds, and none of this is really about "you". It's about paying open attention to what is going on around "you" instead of having thoughts and feeling-tones and storylines and states about "you".

Things begin to open a little, and then there is a tendency to want to fold down again, to make things small again. We are used to having feeling-tones and thoughts fill up the space of our experiencing. They keep us busy with storylines and theories and so forth. When we are sitting, we are not trying to fill up the space of experiencing with feeling-tones and thoughts about ourselves or anyone else. We are opening to a far bigger space, a vast space that is not about us. When we begin sitting, we can open for brief moments and then we will want to fill up the space with something, anything, to distract ourselves.

And this is precisely what we are doing when we identify with and propagate a feeling-tone about not being able to feel. This really comes down to finding a way to distract ourselves from having to do the practice. It doesn't matter whether a feeling-tone that comes up is one that we "like" or one that we "dislike". In either case, if we are giving a feeling-tone too much attention, we do that by narrowing and focussing attention. What should you do about that? Use the noticing of any feeling-tones, thoughts, storylines that come up - whether you "like" them or "dislike them" as a reminder to re-initiate your practice and open to this moment of present experiencing. It doesn't need you to comment on it or feel any way about it. The practice is not about cultivating a state of mind or a certain feeling. It is about paying attention to this moment of present experience as it is, without interpretation.

When you are sitting and you notice a feeling or a feeling-tone, practise with them. This is important because feelings and feeling-tones come up before thoughts do. Thoughts spring up to explain or justify a feeling or a feeling-tone. So unless you release the feeling or the feeling-tone, the thoughts are just going to continue. Feel into the sensations of the breath. Where does the feeling or feeling-tone seem to take place relative to the breath? Is it in front of the breath, behind the breath? Does the breath run through it? As soon as you begin to feel the breath at the diaphragm and the tanden, and open to whole bodily sensation, there is recognition that no thought or feeling-tone is as solid as one might have assumed. It has no real substance. It can have an effect on the whole bodymind if it is propagated, but you don't need to propagate. Just continue to sit up straight, do your practice and open around any tendency to want to lose yourself in a feeling.

This isn't a matter of suppressing or ignoring feeling. It's about being honest with feeling. You don't need to contract in order to feel. You don't need to squeeze your eyes shut or let your posture collapse. You don't need to abstract yourself from bodily sensation or block out colours and forms and sounds in order to feel.

Feel, but allow feeling to arise together with all of the details that make up your life as a whole. Allow feeling to open into a larger context instead of wadding it up into a tight little painful ball in the middle of your chest. Feel the breath, feel the body, open to your life. And allow feeling to open to the knowing in which it too arises.

You might really like some of the feelings you experience - feelings of happiness or euphoria or excitement. And you may hate some of the feelings you experience - feelings of despair, or anger, or self-loathing. With any feeling you experience, come back to the breath. Feel the movement of this breath which gives you life with each breath. Be honest about feeling, by being mindful of the breath and bodily sensation and seeing and hearing. You don't need to exclude sensations and colours and forms and sounds in order to feel. And if you are excluding them.....well, what does that tell you about how honest you are really being about what you feel?

Thoughts, feelings, feeling-tones, storylines, memories are all really quite tricky because they will condition how you experience what you experience. Open feeling-tones and ground feelings by opening attention to things just as they are, beginning with this breath, right now.

## Training Sessions

### Training Sessions for Students Living in Ottawa

There are a number of options available to associate and general students who wish to practice more intensively, such as sitting a full or partial retreat for one or several days, or extending their practice at home to include two or three rounds.

In addition, associate or general students may register for a "training session". This requires making a commitment to one or more full weeks during which they would attend all of the formal sittings at the monastery, morning and evening, with the exception of Tuesday evening and Sunday morning (which are reserved for formal students and monastics) while continuing to live at home.

Training sessions allow students to experience what it is like to participate in the monastery's full schedule. Formal sittings are led by Roshi and include chanting practice and more extensive use of the forms. Students engaging in a training session would also have more opportunities to meet with a Teacher or practice advisor to discuss their practice. At the end of a training session, students would return to their normal schedule. There is no extra dana involved in practising a

training session. Please send an email to schedule at [wwzc dot org](mailto:wwzc.org) to register for a training session.

### Training Sessions For Public Students

This requires making a commitment to a period of one or more full weeks during which public students sit zazen according to the following schedule:

Monday morning: 6:00 a.m. to 7:25 a.m.; Monday evening: 7:30 to 9:10 p.m.

Tuesday morning: 6:00 a.m. to 7:25 a.m.

Wednesday morning: 6:00 a.m. to 7:25 a.m.

Thursday morning: 6:00 a.m. to 7:25 a.m.; Thursday evening: 7:30 to 9:10 p.m.

Friday morning 6:00 a.m. to 7:25 a.m. (Friday is hosan and there are no scheduled sittings at the monastery, but students are expected to sit at home).

Saturday morning: 6:00 a.m. to 7:25 a.m.

Sunday morning: 6:00 a.m. to 7:25 a.m.

Public students who wish to do a training session should send an email to schedule at [wwzc dot org](mailto:wwzc.org) to state their intention and specify the duration and schedule of their Training Session. After completing the training session, please send an email to schedule at [wwzc dot org](mailto:wwzc.org) to confirm that you have fulfilled your commitment and notice of it will be included in the eMirror.

Transparent

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, June 11th, 2010

The leaves of oak trees outside the Hatto window rustle in the wind. A crow caws, a car passes. Rain falls. As each of these sounds arise within the space of hearing they interact with the space in which they arise and point to the space around them. The Sakyamuni Buddha rupa on the Butsudan points to the space around it. And each of you, sitting on your zafu, point to the space around you. Everything that you see or hear, every sensation you experience points to the space around it. In fact, everything you experience, large or small, points to the space around it. When you feel the heat of summer or the cold of winter or see the sun rise or set or look at the night sky, these may seem vast but they are still pointing to the yet vaster space around them.

Being transparent to experiencing does not mean stepping back, pretending you're not there. Nor does it mean glazing or spacing out. It is not the absence of something; it is meeting the Suchness of experiencing as it actually is, fully and completely. When you meet experiencing as it actually is there is no separation between you and what you are experiencing. And in this I am not just talking about there being no separation between you and the experiences you like. I am talking about all experiencing. In this realm of birth and death there is great beauty as well as great ugliness; there is ease and there is difficulty. There is like and dislike. We want it all to be just 'all alright' for ourselves and for those we care about, all of the time. But it isn't. Everything is impermanent, everything changes. You can try to stand solid and unyielding in the midst of impermanence, but it won't work.

As the word 'transparency' is commonly used, it merely refers to light passing through matter, for example, light passing through a sheet of transparent glass. In the context of our practice, however, we are not talking about light as light waves - light that you can see with your eyes. What is being described is how everything that is known is open to the Knowing that it arises within - if it is known intimately, with the whole bodymind. The knowingness of knowing, the capacity to know, is traditionally called "komyo" or "luminosity", the Luminosity of Knowing. This quality of luminosity is also spoken of as "sunyata" - emptiness, openness, transparency. Whatever is known is not actually a thing, no matter how you might think of it. In the fact of present experiencing, it is a known, an experience, and is utterly transparent. In reality, everything is already exposed, we are already exposed, but we like to think that we can hide.

What hides is self-image, the image we have of ourselves and the world. It doesn't exist as an entity or a thing. It is created through a process of contraction, but when it is propagated and acted out, it can of course cause great harm. From your own experience you know this because there have been times when you have contracted and have propagated a storyline about yourself or about someone else and then have acted it out with dire consequences. The worst of the things that you have done in your lifetime have been the result of contraction. But even contraction is known and all knowns point to the space around them. The problem is that when we are deeply contracted we become stupid-stubborn and don't want to let go of the lies we tell ourselves about ourselves and about the world.

Now that leads to a question about honesty. Is being transparent the same thing as being honest? The answer is yes and no. It is the same thing as being honest if the honesty we are talking about is unconditioned. If it is conditioned by a feelingtone about being honest, or if what is guiding you is some sort of state or agenda, some kind of result you are hoping to achieve, then that is not complete, transparent honesty. Being honest about experiencing has no agenda. It is also not about being confessional, blurting out all of your thoughts or feelings to anyone who will listen. Being truly honest involves a continuous wordless questioning into what we are experiencing, a questioning with the whole bodymind.

We tend to get stuck on the knowns. We continuously react to what we notice. When we see or

experience something pleasant, we want more of it. We grasp after it. When we see or experience something unpleasant, we want to get away from it. We continuously pull and push against experiencing without understanding what it is that we are reacting to or why we are reacting.

Recently, a student asked me about seeing a sunset. It was beautiful and yet, within a few minutes, the perception of beauty changed. The student recognized a kind of perceptual flattening and there was an accompanying discomfort about that. It raised a number of questions about what was being experienced, why there was a sense of detachment and distancing, an inability to fully experience the beauty of the sunset and maintain that experience. It was a very good question.

As a monastic, when I see something beautiful, such as a sunset, or the rippling of water on the stones of the koi pond, or the shadows cast by ivy leaves through the shoji paper on the Zendo windows, there is appreciation of this display of colour and shadow and light. The visual field is very rich. But again, everything we experience is pointing to the far vaster space around it. If you are only paying attention to what is arising within seeing, without feeling into the sensations of the body, without opening to hearing, without seeing the details arising all around the thing you are seeing and the details that arise between you and the thing you are seeing, then you are only experiencing part of the whole. When you open to the whole of experiencing, then a sunset is beautiful but there is no grasping after the experience of it, no trying to freeze it. It changes, you change, and you can allow change because there is the sunset and there is the KNOWING of the sunset together with how you are knowing the sunset, and the luminosity of knowing is all sunsets and sunrises, all days and nights, all moments, all experiences.

When we first start practicing, we think the point of the practice is to notice knowns. We want to narrow and direct attention so that we can just notice this breath. Or just notice that sound. We think that opening attention is noticing a whole bunch of knowns. We even inventory what we are noticing, sometimes following a kind of mental checklist of details we think we should be noticing. This noticing is merely the darting of attention through random impulse, from this to that, from this thing that is known to that thing that is known. From the sound of someone coughing, to a thought, to the breath, to a fragment of teisho, to an itch, to a pain in your knee, to makyo on the wall, to sleepiness. It's really no different from the impulsive darting of attention that comes up in the rest of your life - a restless drifting and grasping and glossing over, of being interested and then bored, turning attention from one thing to another.

This is why there is so much emphasis in our practice on opening attention to the whole body, not just fragments of it. When you feel the breath at the diaphragm, you need to feel it together with the tanden and your hands and your legs crossed and your spine and neck, head, and shoulder. And you need to open to seeing and hearing. You need to practise this moment after moment after moment, the whole time you are sitting. No one thing is 'the point'. All points point to each other and your practise is to open attention to many details simultaneously. Noticing is not enough. One can sit on a couch with a beer in one hand and the TV remote in the other and notice all kinds of stuff. That doesn't mean one is practising.

At first opening attention to many details simultaneously seems difficult because for most of your life attention has been allowed to follow impulse. Now it is being trained and that requires effort. But the effort you need to make does not require straining. The sensations, the colours and forms and sounds are already present. All you are doing is NOT doing what you usually do - distracting and abstracting yourself, following impulse. Instead you are learning to actually pay attention. When we get out of the way and stop obstructing ourselves, we become transparent to experiencing. There is no separation between seeing and what is seen; between hearing and what is heard; between feeling and sensations that are felt.

Refine noticing into mindfulness, into attention, into attentiveness. When there is a painful sensation in your knees, the best way to work with it is not to pull away from it or push against it in your frustration but rather to open attention all around it. When a thought or a feeling tone comes up, loosen around it. This does not mean to loosen mindfulness but to let go of the stance of a thinker through questioning into it, by not knowing what it is, by complete and open questioning. None of our categories about experiencing mean anything at all. None of our images about experience are what experiencing is. We must abandon all views and simply see.

This is important because we believe all kinds of things about ourselves and about our capacities that simply are not true. When attention congeals and contracts, our intelligence becomes very, very limited. When we open attention, we are able to see past the limitations we impose on our experiencing. We see options where previously we thought there were none. We see ourselves and everything else in a very different light. Instead of the harsh spotlight of fear and struggle, criticism and anger, we can open to the Luminosity of knowing, to wisdom, and let it guide us. In the very first Saturday Morning Dharma Talk I heard the Roshi present, he spoke about the Luminosity of Knowing. It was entitled "A Jewel in Bright Light Loses it's Edges", which is a quote from the the "Zenrin Kushu". The Roshi once expressed this as "A jewel in bright light loses it's edges. Or in other words, 'Who gives a fuck what you think?'"

You know what? He's right. We shouldn't give a fuck what we think. Why? Because thoughts are knowns. They don't know anything. We think the centre of our intelligence is the bit that does all of the thinking. If that were true, then how do you know that you are experiencing a thought? Where are you knowing that thought from? What are you knowing it with? The Luminosity of Knowing shines through you, through all of your thoughts, through all of your feelings, through everything you experience, through all that is.

Luminosity is the capacity of Knowing to know.  
It is also called the Current of Feeling.

Awake Awareness is Knowing as such, primordially awake, but when "you" wake up to it, then this distinguishes it from Awareness.

"Awake Awareness" is an intensifier as a phrase.

Luminosity is the capacity to know.

Knowns are the radiance of luminosity.

Awareness is bright right through.

Awake Awareness means you've woken up to it.

To be transparent means that there is absolutely nothing you can hang on to. It means that none of your thoughts are solid. None of your feelings are solid. None of your views or attitudes are solid.

In 1991, Zen Master Anzan Hoshin presented a series of classes on the 8,000 Line Prajnaparamita sutra. These were recorded but there was a problem with the recording equipment and some of the classes were lost. However, I transcribed as much of them as was possible. The following quote is from Class One.

The Roshi begins by quoting the text as translated by Edward Conze:

The text: "Then the Venerable Subhuti, by the Buddha's power, said to the Lord:

The Lord has said, 'Make it clear now, Subhuti, to the Bodhisattvas, the great beings, starting from perfect wisdom, how the Bodhisattvas, the great beings go forth into perfect wisdom! When one speaks of a 'Bodhisattva,' what dharma does that word 'Bodhisattva' denote?"

The Roshi comments:

So here, saying, okay, so what is this thing about Teaching the Bodhisattvas, the great beings or the Mahasattvas? Beginning with perfect wisdom - let's say there is such a thing as perfect wisdom - how does one actually enter into it? When we are speaking of a Bodhisattva, what does that word actually mean?

In the text Subhuti says: "I do not, O Lord, see that dharma 'Bodhisattva' nor a dharma called 'perfect wisdom.' Since I neither find, nor apprehend, nor see a dharma "Bodhisattva' nor a 'perfect wisdom,' what Bodhisattva shall I instruct and admonish in what perfect wisdom?"

The Roshi comments:

So basically he is saying - there is nothing which is a Bodhisattva; there is nothing which is perfect

wisdom. Since this is the case, who could I Teach about perfect wisdom? So he starts off with basically cutting down any kind of expectations that Sariputra or the rest of the Sangha might have. They are used to listening to things, finding the right term, the right word and memorizing that and holding that in their minds. But Subhuti is trying to present something else entirely. He is not trying to present a doctrine. He is not trying to explain anything. He is trying to show people how to see clearly; he is trying to display perfect wisdom to people so that they can recognize it, so that they can practice it, so that they can realize it. So one of the first ways of doing that, of course, is to cut down and cut through whatever concepts that people will use to obstruct perfect wisdom. "

Back to the text.

Subhuti says: "And yet, O Lord, if, when this is pointed out, a Bodhisattva's heart does not become cowed, nor stolid, does not despair nor despond, if he does not turn away or become dejected, does not tremble, is not frightened or terrified, it is just this Bodhisattva, this great being who should be instructed in perfect wisdom. It is precisely this that should be recognized as the perfect wisdom of that Bodhisattva, as his instruction in perfect wisdom. "

The Roshi says:

In the recognition that none of one's categories about experience mean fuck all, in the recognition that none of one's images about experience are what experience is, in the recognition that one must abandon all views and simply see - if you can meet this without fear, then you are a Bodhisattva. If you can do this, this is perfect wisdom. There is nothing else which is perfect wisdom. Just seeing clearly, just paying attention openly, just being aware.

In the text, Subhuti then says:

When he thus stands firm, that is his instruction and admonition. Moreover, when a Bodhisattva courses in perfect wisdom and develops it, he should so train himself that he does not pride himself on that thought of enlightenment. That thought is no thought, since in its essential original nature, thought is transparently luminous.

The Roshi comments:

I don't know if you have any sense of this, but these opening passages of this sutra are most extraordinary. They contain the most radical level and orientation of the Teachings. Anything that one finds in the Shobogenzo, in my own Teachings, in the Mahamudra and Dzog-chen, in any of

the most advanced level of Teachings, is found here. If you can meet your experience without fear, if you can meet your experience openly, train in this, practice this, practice attending openly, that is really all the Teaching that you need. It says,

And the Roshi is now quoting the text and Subhuti is saying:

It is precisely that which should be recognized as the perfect wisdom of that Bodhisattva, as his instruction in perfect wisdom. Moreover, when a Bodhisattva courses in perfect wisdom and develops it, he should so train himself that he does not pride himself on that thought of enlightenment.

The Roshi comments:

The thought of enlightenment is the aspiration, the recognition that there is confusion and that this confusion is suffering, that this confusion is caused by grasping, that this is unnecessary, that one can be free. And yet, even if one holds to this as a credential, one is limiting oneself. If there is any thought whatsoever which is not examined, which is not looked into, then there is still confusion and there is still the roots of suffering. We must examine absolutely everything, openly and clearly. We must take nothing for granted: not who we are, not our memories, not what the body is, not what the mind is, not what our little compulsions are telling us to do, not what our tendencies are telling us to do, not what our fear is telling us to do, not what our anger is telling us to do. Not just those, but any recognition that we might have, any moment of insight, any state no matter how coarse or subtle, must be looked into clearly. Looking into it clearly, we see that the thought, in its essential and primordial nature is transparent luminosity. Whatever one is aware of is the display of Awareness.

Luminosity, (prabasvara) means the ability to illuminate, to turn on the lights in a room and see what is in that room. So Luminosity means the ability to know. And so what is necessary is the recognition that thought is no thought. Thought is not an object; thought does not exist on its own; there is no one which is doing the thinking; the thought has no substance whatsoever. The thought is the display of the Luminosity of Knowing, just as a ripple on water is the display of water. From the point of view of the water there is no ripple, there is just water.

Returning to the text. Subhuti now says:

That thought is no thought, since in its essential original nature thought is transparently luminous.

The Roshi says:

That is the whole Teaching, right there in these opening passages. This is extraordinary. If the Buddha didn't Teach this, then he should have. If the Buddha didn't Teach this, then he wasn't a quarter of the Teacher that he should have been.

Perhaps the Prajnaparamita Teachings were Teachings that originally had been given by the Buddha in some context. This is certainly possible in that if we look at the fact that the sutras were fragments of discourses which were compiled together, mainly sets of stock phrases which were built together to form some kind of storyline and that many of these were not written down until many hundreds of years after the Buddha's death and that monks would wander from place to place and sometimes they would meet and they would share and compare little bits of Teachings that they had heard and in this way texts would form. Perhaps the Prajnaparamita Teachings do form part of the authentic body of the Buddha's words, but we really have no way of knowing what the Buddha actually taught.

The remarkable thing here is that if the Buddha did not Teach these, he should have; and that the people who did compile and present these Teachings did not just simply start their own School. They weren't particularly into any kind of trip. They weren't saying, "Well, look what I've realized and blah blah blah blah blah." They said, "Well here is a tradition which is working - the Dharma - but there are certain points at which people are getting stuck. We don't need to get stuck in that kind of way. We need to go past that." And so they realized that the Prajnaparamita Teachings are the most radical and direct Path and yet they are only really comprehensible in the context of the Gradual Path, only in the context of moment-to-moment mindfulness, paying attention to what is going on, being able to see the process of the five skandhas, so on and so forth. Only when one has encompassed all levels of Dharma is it really Dharma. The radical Path is not something which is completely split off from the rest of the Dharma. It is a way in which the rest of the Dharma can be approached right at the beginning of the Path, or it can be the fruit of the Path, or it can be what one is practicing. But it is not really separate from the Abhidharma Teachings or any of the other things that the Buddha taught. It is not so much a new Teaching as a new view, a new orientation. It is not a doctrine; it is not a Teaching. It is a practice and it is a view.

When I was discussing this just the other day with the Roshi, he pointed out that the line from the Diamond sutra that is on the wall leading to the Shuryo, "Give rise to the mind which abides nowhere" is also a summary of all of this.

Sometimes people will think that they understand these Teachings and think that because they think they understand them, they don't need to sit zazen and to actually practise and embody the teachings. But as Eihei Dogen zenji says in the Fukanzazengi, "Just suppose you become puffed up about your understanding and inflate your little experiences: You think you have seen the truth, attained the Way, recognized the luminosity of mind and can grasp at heaven. You might think that these initial jaunts about the borders are entering the realm of enlightenment but you've lost the

Way of complete liberation." It's like just getting the tip of your toe wet - not even the whole toe - because you think it's safer to keep your distance from it. If you really understood the first thing about these Teachings, there is no way that you could justify not sitting zazen.

So, how do you practise this mind which abides nowhere? How do you train in this while sitting here right now on your zafu? Begin by opening attention to what is most true of your experiencing - that you are sitting here; that you are feeling these sensations, hearing these sounds, seeing these colours and forms. And with any thought, any feeling, any storyline that comes up, open past the assumption that it contains what is true. Questioning into experiencing does not mean following and falling into what is noticed. It means opening past it. It means questioning into it by not knowing what it is, by complete and open questioning, with the whole bodymind.

And this will make self-image quake in its boots. But then self-image is at root fear and withdrawal from the inherent openness of reality. That is what the gesture of contraction is, which becomes clearer when attention opens around structures of contraction: fear.

Just see clearly, just pay attention openly, just be transparent.

Urban Wildlife and the Dangers of Littering

by Jinmyo Renge sensei

July 9th, 2015

Awoken by unfamiliar sounds in the middle of the night, Graham found a flashlight to illuminate the window well outside his bedroom and immediately recognized the distinctive black and white fur of a young skunk. But his head was encased in a paper cup with a plastic dome-shaped lid encircling his neck and he was desperately trying to knock the cup off by striking it against a large stone in the window well. There was really nothing that could be done in the dark, so Graham waited for dawn, listening to the sounds of the young, frightened skunk struggling with the cardboard cup. When the sun came up, there was no sign of the cup as, unable to dislodge it, he had eaten it, which was probably not good for his digestive tract. But the large clear plastic lid still encircled his neck, rather like an Elizabethan collar.

The building we live in is a Zen monastery, Dainen-ji, also known as the Zen Centre of Ottawa of

the White Wind Zen Community. The Zen Centre is a 140 year-old heritage building on the corner of Daly Ave and Friel St in Sandy Hill. It is a beautiful area, especially in the summer, with a lush canopy of trees and carefully tended gardens. This is a residential neighbourhood which also accommodates a very large number of university students as well as a diverse range of urban wildlife, most notably groundhogs, raccoons, skunks, and many varieties of birds. Many of these come to and are nourished by Dainen-ji and its grounds and waterfall garden.

And then there is the litter. People park their cars and empty their garbage onto the streets; students drop pizza boxes, beer bottles, and other assorted garbage wherever they happen to be when they finish with them. All litter is unpleasant for residents and detrimental to wildlife, but of particular danger to skunks is the plastic dome-shaped lids with a large hole in the top which come with these containers: McDonald's "McFlurry", Tim Horton's "Iced Capp" and Wendy's "Frosty". Bubble tea lids also have a similar plastic dome-shaped lid.

Skunks are inquisitive creatures, with poor eyesight but an excellent sense of smell. They are drawn to the smell of ice cream or beverages in these cups, and their pointed faces fit inside the hole in the dome-shaped lid. But once they push their head through the lid, it is impossible for them to free themselves. With this Elizabethan torture device firmly lodged around their neck, a growing skunk suffers dreadfully from the abrasions caused by the plastic lid rubbing against their skin and dies of slow strangulation. The lucky ones might be saved through surgery, but often if people do find them in this condition they just kill them.

However, this skunk managed to find the right window well to fall into. By 5:00 a.m. the monastics and other students who live in the Zen Centre had completed Shinrei (Morning Bells) and beginning to consider how to best handle this. Various options were considered, including how we might tranquilize the skunk and various emails were sent and telephone calls were made, all while preparing for the formal sitting at 6 a.m. This then continued from 7:45 while breakfast and preparations for the 9:30 general sitting were occurring. A veterinarian wished us luck because we wouldn't be able to sedate the skunk, most people just kill them. It seemed that we might have to just risk getting sprayed despite the Introduction To Zen workshop scheduled for the afternoon and having the pungent odour be part of how the public were introduced to us.

We called the animal rescue service of the Ottawa Humane Society again, and they sent Desiree, an officer who was obviously very experienced in handling skunks. She sat next to the window well and spoke softly to the skunk for a good 20 minutes to calm him down. Then she very slowly climbed into the well, holding a blanket which she draped over the skunk. And he promptly sprayed, but he sprayed the blanket not her. She reached under the blanket with a gloved hand and pulled the lid off, then lifted him out of the window well. The skunk was last seen running away at high speed (well, high speed for a skunk, that is).

This needless suffering could be avoided by making sure that we throw bubble lids away and pick up ones we see on the street. Cutting them in half ensures that they won't end up around the neck of a skunk after a racoon has raided your garbage can and scattered its contents on the sidewalk. Even better: don't buy the lids and write to your local purveyor of fast-food to request they change the design of the lids. A public campaign worked in England, where such drink tops had been strangling hedgehogs. A similar campaign would be good for Canadian cities.

Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi is the founder and Abbot of White Wind Zen Community with over 50 years experience of studying, practising and Teaching the Dharma.

The sole purpose and function of a Zen Teacher is to help students to realize their own true natures. This true nature has nothing to do with "personality" and so Anzan roshi insists that the personality of the Teacher is unimportant. Nonetheless, it can help to understand something about the background of the Teacher, and so this brief biography might prove useful.

The Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi is a Western-born elder celibate monk and Dharma-heir of the late Ven. Yasuda Joshu Dainen Hakukaze daiocho. He also had the opportunity to study with his Teacher's Teacher, Hanamatsu Daiji Tenku daiocho for several months.

During the early 1980s, before accepting his own formal students, Roshi also met with various Tibetan Buddhist Teachers of the Nyingma, Gelug, Sakya, Karma Kagyu, Drugpa Kagyu, and Shangpa Kagyu schools in order to better understand how the Dharma was being presented and understood in the West. While mainly comparing Dogen zenji's shikan-taza to Mahamudra (Chagya-chenpo) and Maha-Ati (Dzog-chen), he also received empowerment into various Highest Yoga tantras and completed the commitments for them. He was closest to the late Gelugpa Master, Geshe Khenrab Gajam and presented various classes and commentaries on traditional texts for him and other lamas. Roshi also translated several Mahamudra and Maha-Ati texts with the help of some of these lamas.

Roshi has translated over forty fascicles from the Shobogenzo of Dogen zenji and many other classical Soto Zen texts, as well as many other classic texts such as the Hekiganroku, in the annotated edition of his own Lineage. He is well versed in the Pali suttas, as well as the major Mahayana sutras, and has translated many of the more important texts for use by his students. As well, he often interprets such traditional Teachings as the Seven Factors of Awakening from a Zen perspective to give them new life. In his efforts to provide his students with a comprehensive body of Teachings that clarify all of the necessary aspects and levels of practice, he has written many books and essays (over fifty publications at recent count), and has given many thousands of teisho and Dharma talks.

Accomplished in Zen brush calligraphy, Roshi also teaches through his ikebana and playing of the honkyoku shakuhachi and his superb culinary skills. Almost every aspect of the physical arrangement of the environment of Dainen-ji has been designed by the Roshi to create opportunities for students to discover and unfold richness and simplicity. He encourages students to find ways to express their practice through various media and has integrated practice of the Zen Arts into the Zen Community's curriculum.

Roshi has worked ceaselessly for the establishment of clear foundations for the Transmission of the Complete Teachings. It is our responsibility to apply what we understand.

His dedication to his students takes the form of humour, katsu shouts, poetry, teisho, and his every intention and action.

On Friday, May 18, 2001 he gave Shiho Transmission to Ven. Shikai Zuiko osho-ajari. On Saturday, December 8, 2001 he gave Shiho Transmission to Ven. Jinmyo Renge osho-ajari.

Up until this time he was known as Sensei (Teacher) but having given these Transmissions and created new Teachers he is now referred to as Roshi (the old Teacher).

In February, 2011, following 24 years of her practise, study, and service, Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi conferred upon Ven. Shikai Zuiko osho-ajari the honorific of O-sensei and she was thereafter commonly referred to as Shikai Zuiko o-sensei until her death in October 2020.

On Thursday, May 20, 2021, he gave Inka or complete authorization to Ven. Jinmyo Renge Osho-ajari as a Zen Teacher in her own right. She is now referred to as Jinmyo Renge sensei.

Translations by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi and other are [here](#)  
Teisho and Dharma Talks by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi are [here](#)

Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

On the evening of Thursday, May 20th, 2021 during the May Sogakuki O-sesshin, Ven. Jinmyo Renge osho-ajari received Inka, or the Seal of Authenticity, as a Zen Teacher from Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi, and became his first Dharma-heir. As one who has received mind to mind transmission from the Roshi and holds the Lineage, Jinmyo Renge sensei is thus able to transmit this Lineage at all stages of practice, including transmitting monastic vows and passing on the transmission herself.

Jinmyo sensei has been a student of the Roshi since July of 1990 and was ordained as a monk of the Northern Mountain Order in December of the same year. She has trained in the time-honoured post of Tenzo since 1991 and has trained students in oryoki practice since 1992. As well as bearing a vast range of responsibilities within the Sangha, she presented the monthly Introduction to Zen Workshops from 1993 until 2010.

She received Shiho Transmission from the Roshi on December 8th, 2001 and became a Dharma-successor of Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's Lineage. As well as presenting the foundations of mindfulness and insight, for many years she has also received from the Roshi authorizations to give instruction in koan practice and study, various aspects of kaji and Mikkyo, and the monastic ritsu and shingi.

In addition to providing instruction to Sangha members practising at the monastery in Ottawa she corresponds by email with a large number of students practising in other parts of the world. She is responsible for presenting and organizing many resources such as the Retreat Handbook and other materials.

While serving in the training posts of Shuso, Ino and Godo, her responsibilities included overseeing Great Matter Publications and White Wind Zen Community Archives, as well as the duplication, preservation and transcription of our extensive collection of recorded teisho, Dharma Talks and classes. She has produced weekly issues of the Sangha electronic newsletter, "The eMirror" since 1998.

She worked with Anzan Hoshin roshi on the translation of the Bonmokyō (Bramajala sutra), on the Ten Grave and 48 Supporting Precepts.

Her Dharma Talks reveal the humour, strength and vulnerability characteristic of deep practice.

Previous to acceptance as a formal student by the Roshi in 1990, Jinmyo sensei's background included long study in Sufism, Islam, Hinduism and the Gurdjieff Work. She was a close student of the Sufi master M.R. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen and was trained as an instructor of the Gurdjieff Movements through the Foundation in New York. She has travelled extensively, and has lived in cities in Europe, West Africa, across Canada and in the U.S.A.&nbsp;

Ven. Shikai Zuiko O-sensei, 1942 - 2020

Autobiographical Comments, Tuesday, June 28th, 2011:

Zen Master Anzan Hoshin transmitted to me in May 2001 the welcome responsibility of being his first Dharma successor and Lineage holder. In February, 2011 twenty-four years of practise, study, and service was publicly acknowledged by the Roshi and he called me Shikai Zuiko O-sensei.

On June 25, 2011 the 104th Dharma Talk on the 105th verse from "The Practice of Purity: Verses from the Flower Garland Discourse" drawn from the Avatamsaka Sutra as translated by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin and me, published in 1996, was given to the students at the Saturday morning General sitting.

Born in 1942 into the chaos of personal lives turned upside down during war and having crossed the Atlantic twice by age 5, my parents said that I, their first born child, began asking the questions "What's going on?" and "Who am I?" with the eyes from birth and with words at around 3 years old. By the time I was 45 I had searched and discarded any religious, spiritual and philosophical traditions I had come across and since age 6 I had sought them out. All, to my simple mind, seemed to confuse the issue and couldn't answer "What's going on, really?". In 1987 encountering Anzan roshi (then Sensei) in a bookstore led to asking about that piece of patchwork cloth he was wearing around his neck. Gruffly he replied that it was a rakasu and, "I'm a Zen priest". A few weeks later I took what I vowed was my last shot in "The Search" and called a number in a small ad for "instruction in traditional Soto Zen". Arriving for the meeting I was greeted by the Zen teacher from the bookstore who showed me how to sit zazen and practise, "Sit and if you don't, don't bother coming back." The truth of the teachings of sho-jo-no-shu, realized practice could not

be denied. I sat. I came back. The rest is history. Not smooth sailing, often sailing on an ocean of tears, but, nevertheless, it is history. In 1988 I was ordained as a postulant monk, then a novice, I received transmission as a practice advisor and began training in various posts including several years as tenzo, oryoki leader, kata leader, Introductory Workshop presenter, and then shuso, and eventually, godo.

On February 12, 1991 the Shuso Hossen Dharma talk, "It's Too Easy" was the first of my attempts to present what I have been taught and understand and experience of the Dharma. In the many Dharma talks over the past twenty something years humour, sometimes raw, sometimes eliciting hearty guffaws, and an extensive knowledge of historical and contemporary world culture help draw together the Teachings and the understanding of students. "Freedom and Tyranny" a collection of Dharma talks is available as a free ebook [here](#).

For over 25 years, starting in 1966, I worked in communication, broadcast television, development radio and freelance as a writer, producer, and director in Canada and abroad. A long interest in the capacity of humans to change and how best to achieve that led to certification as an NLP trainer and in 1987 to the creation of an elegant method for effecting change the Roshi named Shinjin™. Additional study and certification as a Constructive Living: Morita Naikan instructor, and in Anmo Tuina bodywork from Quanganmen Hospital in Beijing all based in my own on-going practice and study with Anzan Hoshin roshi led to the development of Practical Mindfulness™, and ZeNLP™. After a hiatus I am reviving and updating these useful and accessible methods.

Over the years since I first started to practise I have introduced hundreds of people to mindfulness practice in Canada, Europe and the U.K. I continue to teach face-to-face in daisan and over the miles by teledaisan and email.

Along the way I have designed spaces and clothing and costumes, exhibited photographs, paintings, multi-media works, and videos in Canada and abroad even winning some prizes and honourable mentions. Some photographs are on our website and "coming soon" some vintage video work. A rough outline for a multi-media presentation of "The Flower Garland Sutra" conceived in 1992 has recently surfaced and there's possibility that it may mate with the help of the newer technologies with the "Every Breath You Take" Series...and....stay tuned.

Ven. Shikai Zuiko O-sensei — February 6th, 1942 - October 31st, 2020 (Obituary Notice)

On Saturday, October 31st, Shikai Zuiko O-sensei died of pneumonia at the Montfort Hospital. Brilliant, fierce, and funny, she was deeply loved and lived a long life of many accomplishments. An artist in different media, she had been a broadcaster and travelled the world. In 1987 she became my student.&nbsp;

Here is one of the first poems I wrote for her:

one mind,  
one body,  
no mind,  
no body&nbsp;

in this moment  
who are you?

what is this moment?

everyday  
you breathe in and  
breathe out

why?

Well?

She was the first student to receive monastic ordination and was a trailblazer for many. Here are some autobiographical comments: <https://wwzc.org/ven-shikai-zuiko-sensei>. As a practice advisor and then Dharma Teacher she continued to travel for many years. She brought our Lineage's Zen to England and Germany, to prisons and universities. Over the past years as her health suffered she stopped travelling but always carried and upheld the Dharma.

Since her death and up until Saturday, December 19th, monastics and residents at Dainen-ji have been practising the Komyo Shingon. If you have received instruction in this practice you are welcome to join with us in your home practice.

Traditionally in our Lineage the cremated remains of Teachers are cast into the air to become traceless. During this time of the pandemic this will be delayed indefinitely. When it is possible this ceremony will be held and her ashes will be scattered by the water garden that she loved so well. For the time being, her remains are in the Hojo.

Her two best friends, the cats Kitsune and Shindo, are being well cared for.

If you have memories or stories about Shikai O-sensei that you would like to share then please feel free to write them down. Eventually these will be collected into a "sayings and doings" (yulu or goroku) commemorating her life, practice, and Teaching.

- Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Ven. Yasuda Joshu Dainen daiocho

Yasuda Joshu Dainen roshi (1895-1979) was of a generation of pioneers of Japanese Zen Buddhism. He trained arduously as a young novice at Tenku-in, a small mountain temple, under Hanamatsu Daiji Tenku roshi. He received shiho when he was only twenty years old and inka, his Master's final seal, only a few years later. He spent some time at Soji-ji and Eihei-ji, the two main centres of the Soto Zen Buddhist Church, training in the ceremonial forms there but like his own Master avoided being drawn into the position of a parish priest and funeral director. Instead he continued to follow rigorous zazen practice in various locations, accepting only a few students.

Disturbed by the militarization of Japan he left the country in 1934 and travelled through China, Korea, Burma, Thailand, and India studying how the Dharma was understood or misunderstood, was practised or not practised. He returned to Japan in 1952 and then left again in 1964. He travelled in Europe and in England in the late 1960s he met a small group of young people who began to study with him. One owned some farmland in southern Ontario in Canada and offered the land to Joshu roshi to use to establish a monastery. Soon after this, the Roshi and a band of hippie-generation students arrived near Hamilton, Ontario and converted a small farmhouse into the abbot's quarters and bathing facilities and an old barn into a zendo. This was named Hakukaze-ji.

The community once swelled as large as twenty-five monks but the population varied widely season after season. Practice was rigorous with six to ten hours of zazen daily and monthly week long O-sesshin of eighteen hours of zazen. During this time he translated much of Eihei Dogen zenji's Shobogenzo and other essays, Keizan Jokin zenji's Denkoroku and other works, and various collections of koan and liturgical works with the assistance of Anzan Hoshin who eventually received shiho and inka in Joshu Dainen's Dharma. In 1978 his own Teacher Daiji Tenku was brought to Hakukaze-ji for a few months and the three Teachers collaborated on annotating the Hekiganroku.

Joshu roshi died December 12th, 1979, of stomach and bone cancer.

Teisho, Dharma Talks, and translations by Ven. Yasuda Joshu Dainen daiocho are found here.

Virya: Exertion

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei

Dainen-ji, June 10th, 2006

Not long ago it was spring and now it is becoming summer. From spreading roots, shoots and stems have appeared and now countless buds burst forth and blossom and then fall to the ground. In the monastery garden, the ferns have unfolded and now tower above spreading moss. Skunks and squirrels and hundreds of finches have come to drink from the stream along with a mother racoon and her young who also stopped by the front porch to investigate the Buddha rupa and offering bowl. And the Engleman ivy creeps up the building with small fingers that attach themselves to the brickwork.

Not long ago, it was night and now its morning. Not long ago, we began this Dharma Assembly and not too long from now, it will already be over. Not too long from now, someone will be listening to the recording of this Dharma Talk and I will have been dead for years. It all happens so quickly. This happening, this activity, this exertion of the reality of impermanence is all that is ever going on. Our practice is the practice of opening to this reality and realizing it as part of our own natures.

Virya, or exertion, is one of the six Paramitas. The Paramitas describe aspects of being Awake to Reality that unfold through the process of practice. You have to start off with some initial element of, say, generosity, exertion, and so forth, but they unfold dynamically as you actually practice. In the Mahayana schema there are six Paramitas:

Dana Paramita: generosity

Sila Paramita: Integrity or discipline

Ksanti Paramita: Patience or flexibility

Virya Paramita: Exertion

Dhyana Paramita: Zazen or practice

Prajna Paramita: Radical insight or perfectly knowing emptiness

Of these six, exertion is the most important Paramita because without exertion, nothing is going to happen. We will just sit around instead of actually sitting and doing the practice of realization.

There are many ways of understanding what virya is, such as "the sustained effort to overcome laziness"; vitality; enthusiasm; prowess and potency. But none of these understandings are adequate to what we need to understand through and within our practice.

In the book, "The Pathless Path", Zen Master Anzan Hoshin says about virya:

...Exertion may well be the most crucial of the Paramitas that we must develop. Without it, our practice can only be based on images and ideas, expectations and concepts. Exertion is like the fine steel of a sword blade. Without a strong blade, it does not matter how sharp or well-honed the edge is, because the blade will snap off at the handle as soon as it is drawn. In fact, without exertion, the blade will just stay in the scabbard.

To truly sever the confusion and duality of the usual mind with Manjusri's sword of Dhyana and Prajna we must be able to exert THIS fully, holding nothing back. If we do not sever the duality and strategies of the usual mind, then the seamless unity of the whole moment will never be lived.

In order to practice beyond strategy we must first see our strategies, not to follow them but to open beyond them. And so it is of utmost importance to stay with the instructions we have been given and refrain from making up and following our own version of the practice. Not propagating means not propagating any thoughts, feelings, theories and concepts about anything and this of course applies to our practice as much as it does any other topic that might come up while one is sitting. Thinking about practicing is not practicing. If you have not been specifically told to do something in your practice, then don't do it. Ask about it if something has caught your attention and you think it worth discussing, but don't experiment.

There are ten thousand strategies that we may attempt to apply to our practice, but in the end they all fall apart. For instance, hunkering down around the breath instead of using the breath as a touchstone from which to open to the whole of experiencing will just lead to more and more discursiveness. Students will also sometimes "watch" themselves practicing, as though following themselves around. If you follow yourself around, you will inevitably get in your own way. Continuously "assessing" one's "progress" is another pitfall that frequently comes up. Letting yourself passively drift into storylines and justifying this by occasionally checking to see if you are still breathing or if the wall is still there and then going straight back into the storyline is not exerting yourself in your practice. Over and over again I see students allowing themselves to fall into the same cesspools of confusion and torpor again and again. Don't just muck about in that stuff. Don't put your face in it. **STAND UP** from it. How do you do that? Sit up straight, Shut up. Practice.

The Roshi continues,

Exertion must be clean, it must be free of strategies and romantic notions about enlightenment

and Buddhahood. There is no use gritting your teeth and locking your legs in full lotus and trying to pull yourself out of samsara and into nirvana.

There is simply nowhere else that you can be than right here, in this moment. Exertion does not imply some kind of spiritual gymnastics or punching out self-image.

Exertion is surrendering completely into attentiveness again and again. Exertion is being utterly straightforward with whatever arises. Exertion is doing whatever needs to be done, and doing so as completely as possible: taking a complete step, a complete breath, touching completely, hearing completely. This is complete and wholehearted practice.

Without this kind of exertion all of this would just be talk. We could say, "Oh yeah, everything is Buddha Nature inhering within itself. Don't struggle, just wake up." And we could go through the motions, sit on the zafu and stare at the wall for the prescribed number of minutes and bide our time. But what is time? Who is this?

Zen is "the direct transmission outside words and letters, pointing directly to the mind," pointing directly to the moment, directly to just this.

The wall exerts itself completely and directly as the wall. No doubts about it, nothing held back, nothing pushed forward. No matter whether you call it a wall or not, the wall exerts itself completely as what it is. This exertion is what the wall is.

Complete exertion is our practice, it is what practice is. Cutting through blame and fame, hope and fear, here we are. Breathing in, breathing out.

Without calling it samsara or nirvana, good or bad, self or other, let us exert ourselves completely in just this. If you are walking, walk; if you are talking, talk; if you are listening, listen. In complete exertion, in whole-hearted practice, the Buddha Dharma begins to exert itself. If we exert ourselves completely as this breath, then this breath will begin to exert itself. Seeing has its own intelligence, hearing has its own intelligence; you are redundant. All struggle drops away and we discover that we don't even have to try to know anything.

Everything is self-known without a knower, without a known. Limitless Knowingness begins to dawn and continues to blaze as the mandala in which enlightenment is continuously born.

This occurs nowhere else and in no other time than just this. So let us exert ourselves completely, practice completely, realize the Way completely.

Moment after moment, the world opened by practice extends in the Ten Directions, exerting itself as sun and rain and wind. It exerts itself as the pain in your knee and the pleasure of cool water on

your face on a hot summer day. It exerts itself as the creaking of the floorboards on which you walk in kinhin. It exerts itself as the empty toilet roll that needs changing, the printer that won't print, the bill that can't be paid, and exerts itself as your job, your family and your friends. It exerts itself right now and in each moment as everything you experience. The world presents itself as rich, playful, ever-changing details.

You are not separate from the exertion of the world and the possibility of your Waking Up exists only because of the possibility of your exertion. Unless you exert yourself, you're not really sitting, you are just sitting around. But if you're pushing and pulling you're not sitting either. You are doing some weird meditation trip.

When we are really practicing, we are not making anything happen. We do not make the sensations happen or the colours and forms and sounds happen. They are already present. All that we need to do is let attention fall open to what is already the case. Sensations and colours and forms and sounds already exert themselves. When you release yourself into this exertion, you release yourself into that which exerts itself as you and exerts itself as the world.

In the teisho series, "Wild Time: Commentaries on Dogen zenji's "Uji: Being Time", the Roshi says,

Everything arises here and now.

It is not that this arising is a matter of here plus now.

Here is now.

Now is here.

It is not a matter of time plus place equals our experience.

It is now equals here equals is.

This is the exertion that you must release yourself into in order to realize who you are.

Without the exertion of you releasing yourself, nothing is realized, nothing is real.

All that you have are stories,  
descriptions,  
presumptions,  
and  
fixations.

By releasing yourself into That which unfolds itself as everything,  
which arises everywhere as everything, right now,  
you realize this arising.

You are the realization of this arising.

Without the exertion that needs no one to do it,  
that is done by no one at all  
but is simply exertion exerting itself,  
Nothing would arise.

We are open to the exertion of this moment only when we do not hold ourselves back or get in our own way by following tendencies and habits. Actually recognizing that a pattern is a pattern, that a tendency is a tendency, can be difficult. We have used patterns and tendencies to define ourselves and can sometimes find it impossible to believe that we can be any other way. But as Roshi says, "We are really only ourselves as we really are when we are open to reality as it is." And we can do this so easily. All that we need to do is actually sit when we sit. Just sitting around just won't do it. Just sitting back and hoping it will all work out won't do it.

Open to this breath. Now. Now. I mean it. Now. I really really mean it. Please? It's not just for your own good. There is no good that you can do without doing this. Look at this world. Read the newspapers. Or just actually listen to the nasty stuff you tell yourself about yourself. And about other people. It's terrible. The problem is that every body else is saying these terrible things to themselves about themselves and every one else. And they're out there: driving cars, shooting guns, buying shoes, having babies, ruling countries, writing code, playing music, cooking and eating and all of the things that affect every one and every thing else in the world. Someone has to do these things that doesn't have such a grudge about actually doing something clearly and completely and well. So, please, exert yourself. Exert yourself by just stopping. Stop that stuff. Just sit up straight. Now.

I mentioned before how quickly everything goes. Now this Dharma Talk is almost finished. Spring comes and goes, summer comes and goes, autumn comes and goes, winter comes and goes. You and I and all of us come and go. So let go. Let go INTO this coming and going. Exert yourself by not following yourself around and open to the ten directions all around you.

Now I've finished talking. You should stop talking to yourselves too. And so let's all sit.

What Does it Take to Become Buddha?

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge Sensei (While Training as "Ino")

April 10th, 1998, Honzan Dainen-ji

What does it take to become Buddha? Absolutely nothing, absolutely everything....although having a good sense of humour doesn't hurt.

To be a Buddha we must use every moment of our experience, be willing to receive richness and release poverty. To be a Buddha requires that we stop our games and learn how to be playful. To be a Buddha means that we must wake up, again and again and again to what all the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors of the Lineage of Transmission have Awakened as.

To wake up we need to be able to sit when we are too tired or crabby to want to. To wake up we need to stand up and do kinhin just when we have stumbled on some state of peacefulness that we enjoy.

Yunju Daoying daiosho said, "If you want to realize this thing of Suchness, you must be a person of Suchness." Get it?

Suchness is the Reality of who we are all are. A Buddha is one who has Awakened to who she really is, the Reality which presents itself everywhere as everyone. Although we are all people of Suchness, although Reality is what we truly are, unless we realize this, we are not a Buddha.

Dogen zenji said, "You can't fabricate a Buddha through sitting or lying down." Get it? He said this in the Fukanzazengi, an essay concerned with how to sit and how to live as Awareness. His point is that although we sit, sitting is not something that can fashion us into a Buddha. A Buddha is someone who has no strategies, is not conditioned, does not move attention towards or away from anything at all. And so a Buddha is not fashionable, is not concerned with how he appears to be. A Buddha is without strategies yet lives her life as a seamless activity of skillful means, using situations to Awaken others.

To wake up, we need a Teacher who can show us the nature of our experiencing through the process of Transmission. Transmission can take place anywhere at any time. The 10,000 koan and Recorded Sayings and Doings of ancient Zen Masters all recount such moments. You will notice that most of my Dharma Talks involve stories about our own Teacher, Zen Master Anzan Hoshin. This is because these stories are not only of contemporary situations but the heart of them shows the core of every one of the old stories, alive here and now. And what is Transmitted is who we all are and what here and now is. Sometimes it occurs when seated in the presence of the Teacher; sometimes it occurs when one is doing the laundry. So, of course, I have a laundry story to share with you.

About eight years ago, Rev. Dozan anagarika was visiting from Great Britain and one afternoon, the Roshi, Dozan anagarika and I went shopping. I could write a Dharma Talk about shopping with

the Roshi, but I'll save that for another time.

This story is about a set of wind chimes we found in a shop that day. We didn't buy them, as they were quite expensive, but I remember that the Roshi was pleased with both the quality of craftsmanship and their tone.

During this time, I was not living in the monastery. I lived in a ground floor apartment not far from the Zen Centre and between sittings was making quite a project of making my living space as Zen-like as possible. I had stripped the walls bare, removed whatever I hadn't used, looked at, or thought about for six months and so on. Over the next few days, I kept thinking about these chimes and although I was on a very limited budget, decided that I should buy them. And so I did, and hung them on my porch. Now, you'd think that would be the end of that, but it wasn't, because a very inconvenient question began to form and as much as I tried initially to ignore it, it just would not go away.

You see, I could not ignore the fact that it was the Roshi who had discovered the chimes and it was he who recognized their quality and it was he who could not buy them for the monastery because finances were so tight, but it was I who was listening to them. And so, the melodic tone of the chimes began to take on a sour note that just could not be ignored.

I was pondering this one morning, while putting a load of laundry into the washing machine. I cranked the dial and the machine began its noisy labour. I remember leaning against the machine, listening to it chugging away. As I listened, there was a dawning of recognition that ultimately articulated itself as, "Well, I can always listen to the sound of the washing machine."

After all, the point of an ikebana or sho or arrangement of stones created by the Roshi is to help us to see. Chanting practice helps us to speak. Incense helps us to smell. The sound of the Roshi's shakuhachi or of the chiming of wind bells helps us to hear. As we open more and more to the simplicity of our experience and stop trying to be the one who sees or hears, the richer all colours and sounds become.

Decision made, I took the chimes down, repacked them in their box and drove to the Zen Centre. When I arrived, the Roshi was seated in the garden with Dozan anagarika. Very nervously, I offered the box. I was so nervous, in fact, that my hands shook. And this was because, of course, neither the Sensei nor Dozan anagarika knew anything about this little drama I had gone through, let alone what was in the box. At the time, I thought they might think I was completely nuts if I attempted any sort of explanation. Perhaps the Roshi might think I was trying to curry favour or roll over like a dog to show my belly. I certainly felt exposed but it became immediately apparent that any idea we might have about the mind of a Zen Master is too simplistic and cartoon like to mean anything.

The Roshi saw my nervousness, lightly gestured for me to come closer and said "It's all right." He

smiled brightly as he took the box from my hands, looked directly into and through my eyes and said, before opening it, "Well, you can always listen to the washing machine."

There is a word in the Japanese text of *Uji* or *Being-Time* by Dogen: "Kappatsupachi" -- it means the sound of a fish slapping its tail. Unmistakable, distinct, crisp. A moment of Transmission is like that - simple, direct, it is what it is. So I didn't say anything. The Roshi smiled and said, "Where should we hang them?" If any of this had been about me, I would have said "outside your window." But neither of us suggested that and so, for over seven years, the chimes hung over the front door of Zazen-ji, where they sang into the busy activity of Somerset Street West, for Anzan Roshi, for all students as they arrived, and for passers-by who would take the time to notice.

Anzan roshi spends endless hours with students, listening to their stories, entering into their experience in order to show them what it takes to be a Buddha. I was recently thinking about one of these informal conversations between the Roshi and a student that I was also present for. The student was describing being very tired, coming home and wanting only to go to his room. But he was intercepted by someone in the hallway who wanted to talk....and talk.....and talk. The Roshi listened to this with his eyes lowered and then slowly brought his gaze up. And then he said "You should have said that you were going to sit in zazen ." The student said "Yes, I only said I was going to sit". This exchange was very quick, and may seem almost trivial, but what I saw of it was far from trivial. This is some of what I saw:

Firstly, the Roshi had not been told by the student that his reason for wanting to escape this meaningless conversation was in order to sit. In fact, the way he told it implied only that he was tired and wanted to go to bed.

The Roshi not only filled in the missing information, but told him what he had actually said and then told him what he should have said to make himself clear to the other person. And this was done so seamlessly and effortlessly that the student missed it altogether.

But there was something else that I noticed, something that I've seen many times before. Just a moment or so before the Roshi had asked me to straighten up and so I was more attentive than I would ordinarily have been. When the Roshi raised his head, he did so very slowly. I was seated just a few feet from him, watching attentively. As his eye gaze lifted, as closely as I can describe it, it was like seeing sunlight shining through water. And the light, as it shone right to the bottom, exposed everything, rocks, plants, small creatures, mud, all exposed in minute detail by the light. Similarly, in that moment, all of the stances, states, hopes and fears experienced by both myself and the other student were exposed in minute detail.

This is traditionally called *Komyo*, or *Luminosity*. *Komyo* means "bright brightness." *Myo* in particular has the meaning of the first light of morning spreading on the horizon. And this is the *Radiance* spoken of by all of the Awakened Ones, as taught by the Buddha.

Sounds great doesn't it? But wait, I'm not finished yet. You see, a true Teacher will teach by example, but then insists that the student take responsibility for what is shown. Get it? So, how do you take responsibility for having seen, having experienced a moment of komyo? Here is an example.

A few days later, I was feeling very sad. I don't really know why. Often when I feel sad, there really isn't a reason for it that I can find. But, as is the case for any other student, there is a strong tendency to try to find one. I was sitting alone, observing the fragments of thoughts and feeling tones trying to assemble themselves into some sort of coherent storyline and noticed that my eye gaze had lowered. I raised it slowly and looked out the window. Sunlight was streaming through the trees and the sky was brilliant blue.

It was bright bright. And in this brightness I saw that I had a clear choice. I could be sad or I could open to the brightness and allow myself to be as transparent as water, the sadness no more than a detail, along with the mud, rocks, plants or other small creatures. And that was what I needed to vow to do, as a monk, in order to take responsibility for myself and for others. And that this would mean to release every fear, every sadness, every sorrow, every apparent obstacle, both my own and other's into this Luminosity.

I hovered on the edge of a decision, just as I had with the wind chimes, but not for too long. I knew right from the start that this practice would cost me everything and I was right. You would not believe the number of well-intentioned, stupid stances, ridiculous states and petty nonsense I've had to give up. Seven years ago, I signed a blank cheque and gave it to the Roshi. I mean an actual piece of paper made out like a cheque. When I handed it to him he laughed and handed me a contract that he had written up. This blank cheque is hidden somewhere here in Dainen-ji, but I don't think I should tell you where it is. Well, here's a hint: any monk here could figure out where it is in about three seconds.

So what does it take to become a Buddha? Absolutely everything, absolutely nothing. And a sense of humour doesn't hurt.

It is impossible to try to figure out how this wonderful practice works. Feeling the breath, hearing a note of a bird's song, coming alive to this moment, even if only for a moment, is wonderful, so amazing, that sometimes I cannot help but laugh.

The Roshi tells a great joke. He says it is his favourite knock knock joke. Like this practice, it is subtle, easy, but a continuous challenge:

Knock, knock

Who's there?.....

Have a good morning.

What is Zen?

Zen is simply the direct Way of Awakening. It is just allowing ourselves to enter into the heart of this moment, which is the heart of our lives. It is simply paying attention to our actual experiences, to our lives as they are: a breeze passing your cheek, rain falling and soaking the earth and trees, a stomach ache, the laughter of children playing -- seeing what you see, feeling what you feel. Colours, forms, sights, sounds, touch, taste, smell, thoughts, all coming and all going. Where do they come from and where do they go? Zen is entering into things as they are, beyond concept and cosmology, beyond separation and duality, beyond personality, and into the intimacy and richness of this whole moment. It is a radical questioning into whatever arises as our experiences and true entry into the nature of experiencing. Zen is the day to day and moment to moment practice of this moment. It is the transmission of yourself to yourself in a Lineage of Teacher to student, face to face. It is a mind-to-mind transmission that has spanned two thousand, six hundred years from India to China to Japan to right here.

Our original Teacher, Sakyamuni Buddha said to his students one day in a talk that has been recorded as the Satipatthana sutta, the Discourse on Mindfulness, that "There is but one way to liberation and that is mindfulness." Mindfulness is paying attention with the whole bodymind to the whole of experiencing. It is going past hesitation and reference points, past confusion and fabrication and into our actual lives. Liberation means freedom from the need to hide from ourselves and our world; it means finding out who and what this really is, what this world really is. Buddhadharma, the Teaching of Awakening, is the practice of sitting, walking, breathing, working, and speaking with mindfulness and insight. As such, Buddhadharma is not just "a religion, a dogma, a cultural artifact, a comfort, a skill, an art, or a philosophy". It is the presentation of our own natures. Zen is just this.

- Four Gates of Zen Practice: A Beginner's Manual

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

## White Wind Zen Community

The White Wind Zen Community is the Sangha of students of Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi. The Community was founded in 1985 and has several aspects: the Northern Mountain Order which is the monastic core of the community, and the community of formal, general, associate and public students.

In 1985, when Zen Master Anzan Hoshin was asked to name the Sangha of students who had gathered around him, he named this community White Wind Zazenkai - Hakukaze Zazenkai, after the monastery that his own teacher had founded, Hakukaze-ji, and the name of the stream of Dogen's Lineage of Zen that he had inherited and has now passed on.

Zazenkai means "gathering together for zazen." The Zazenkai was renamed White Wind Zen Community in 1989 and is now based in the Zen Centre of Ottawa. It also has branch centres in Guelph, Ontario; Wolfville, Nova Scotia; and Harrow, England; and students practising individually around the world.

### Programs

The Community provides an ongoing environment of training and study of the vast body of the Dharma for monastics and lay students. This includes morning and evening sittings, monthly sesshin and seven-day O-sesshin four times a year (intensive training periods), Dharma Assemblies, and opportunities for students to schedule retreats and periods of residential training. As well as the extensive collection of teisho (formal presentations of the Teachings) presented by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin, his Dharma heir, Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei also continues to present Dharma Talks. All of the Dharma Talks that were previously presented by his late Dharma successor, the Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei (1942 - 2020) are listed here.

Ongoing programs for the public to contact the Dharma include monthly Introduction to Zen workshops and the Long Distance Training Program. The Zen Centre of Ottawa also hosts tours and makes available speakers to grade schools and high schools throughout the region.

[Introduction to Zen Workshops](#)

[Long Distance Training Program](#)

## Upcoming Events at the Zen Centre of Ottawa

### Enrolment

Enrolment in the White Wind Zen community as a student in this Lineage takes seven basic forms: associate student, general student, probationary formal student, formal student, monastic, branch student, or public student, as described in *Entering the Gates of Practice*.

Associate students attend the weekly Thursday evening associate sittings, receive daisan (private meetings with a Dharma Teacher) or practice interviews (private meetings with a practice advisor) and have access to recorded teisho and Dharma Talks. They may attend Dharma Assemblies, schedule retreats or engage in a period of residential training. General students attend at least one general sitting and one formal sitting and may arrange to attend all scheduled sittings except for those sittings and sesshin specifically designated for formal students or monastics.

Probationary formal students and formal students study and practice intimately with the Roshi or Jinmyo sensei and attend scheduled formal sittings and monthly sesshin. Formal students committed to deepening their own practice and becoming a resource for the practice of their fellow students may enter the rigour of monastic training as a laymonk or monk. Branch members practise at centres or groups established under the direction of the Roshi. Residential training at Dainen-ji is available.

Public students (students living outside commuting distance of the monastery) from across Canada, the United States, Europe, India, China, Japan, the Middle East, and West Africa practise through the Long Distance Training Program. These students practise at home and receive regular instruction by email, telephone, and letter. They have access to recorded teisho, Dharma Talks and classes from the online Recorded Teachings library.&nbsp;

### eMirror Newsletter

#### Subscribe

The eMirror is a free newsletter published weekly and emailed out every Friday. Each issue is illustrated and includes quotations from teisho and information about our schedule and activities.&nbsp;

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### Practice Calendar

For a monthly view or to print the calendar, please go to visit the online calendar page.

