

# **Freedom and Tyranny**

A series of Dharma Talks and Zen Mondo  
presented by  
Ven. Shikai Zuiko osho



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## **Foreward**

**by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi**

In the Daibonten-o-monbutsu-ketsugi-kyo, the Sutra of Questions and Answers between Mahabrahman and the Buddha, it says,

*“Then Sakyamuni Buddha, on Vulture Peak Mountain in the western lands, in the midst of an assembly of millions, held up an udumbara flower and blinked. At that moment the Venerable Mahakasyapa smiled. Then Sakyamuni Buddha said, “I hold the Treasury of the Eye of True Utter Reality, the luminous Awareness beyond reference point. This I transmit to Mahakasyapa.”*

Thus was the mythological moment that the real Transmission of the Dharma of Awake Awareness is traditionally said to have begun. From India to China it passed through ages of legend until the Sixth Chinese Ancestor Dajian Huineng passed it face-to-face to Qingyuan Xingsi and Nanyue Huiarang. From Qingyuan it continued through bodies and minds until Eihei Dogen zenji received it by dropping through the bodymind. From there it has continued to here, passed from Joshu Dainen zenji to myself and from myself to Shikai Zuiko, Jinmyo Renge, and perhaps many others if there are years yet to come.

Shikai Zuiko osho-ajari not only holds up a flower, not only blinks, but also smiles and laughs. In her Dharma Talks and Mondo she presents the Dharma of mindfulness and insight with mindfulness and insight yet also with a modern voice that is easy to hear and to listen to. Some of the words of that voice are printed here. I hope that in reading them you can hear her laughter and find yourself, also laughing.

With palm to palm,  
Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi  
Abbot of Dainen-ji and the White Wind Zen Community  
September 16, 2006

## **Introduction**

These wonderful Teachings are a collection of Dharma Talks and mondo (direct question and answer) given by the Ven. Shikai Zuiko osho since December 1991. Most of them were recorded in the context of sittings over the course of Dharma Assemblies, others during our ongoing evening sittings at the Zen Centre of Ottawa. Through the generous efforts of many monastics and students, they were then transcribed so that the public can now benefit from reading them. It is important to note that these Teachings were not read from a text that was written in advance but were instead presented in a more or less spontaneous fashion and have been transcribed with very few changes from the recordings. That being said, the reader will often notice that the style is not literary but more conversational. This is even more evident in the case of mondo, which are questions and answers that arise through the interaction between Teacher and student.

In these Dharma Talks and mondo, Ven. Shikai Zuiko osho invites us to explore and question the ways in which we become entrenched in our ideas and unquestioned assumptions about ourselves and the world and move past them to step directly into the ground of open experiencing. From this ground, intelligent choices can be made on the basis of our moment-to-moment experience. From this ground, the choices we can make are clear and free of the rules that stem from the closed circles of conceptualization. From this ground, the choices we can make become simple and obvious. From this ground, we can choose to stop suffering and instead begin to enjoy the landscape of our lives.

A Teacher like Ven. Shikai Zuiko osho can help us do this. Not because she has some special magic wand or superior ideas to teach us, but because the process of being

human is the same for every human being. And the ways in which we make ourselves and others suffer, regardless of the content of the suffering, arise from the same basic mechanism of self-image. She's been there. She's done that. And today, she can point to each and every one of us, with great dignity and humour, how we too can stop it. And begin to have some real fun.

You need not believe it. You need not be convinced by it. But you can do it. And Shikai osho is a living example of this.

*“We all have recognized, or are in the process of recognizing more clearly, that we can and must practice to stop that cycle of tyranny.”*

— Ven. Shikai Zuiko osho,  
from “Overthrowing the Inner Dictator”

Ven. Senbo shramon

## **Dedication**

“Freedom and Tyranny” is dedicated to Zen Master Anzan Hoshin roshi, my Teacher. Freely offering this priceless practice of Sho Jo No Shu as taught by Dogen’s Lineage of Zen, he taught me that freedom from suffering and the tyranny of self-image is the realized Way.

On March 28, 1989 Anzan Hoshin roshi wrote these instructions for me:

### **Komyo Doka**

Instructions for Shikai anagarika

When there is no seeking within  
or groping without,  
then the complexity of fabrication  
releases into the simplicity of luminosity.

Then all states simply occur as they are  
and do not waver,  
do not gather, do not disperse.

Nothing joined, nothing broken,  
luminosity dances on the ground of essencelessness,  
bodies and minds arising and going around it  
iridescent and playful as jewellery.

This ground of essencelessness  
is the primordial mandala of all the Buddhas and  
Ancestors,  
the root of formless forms.

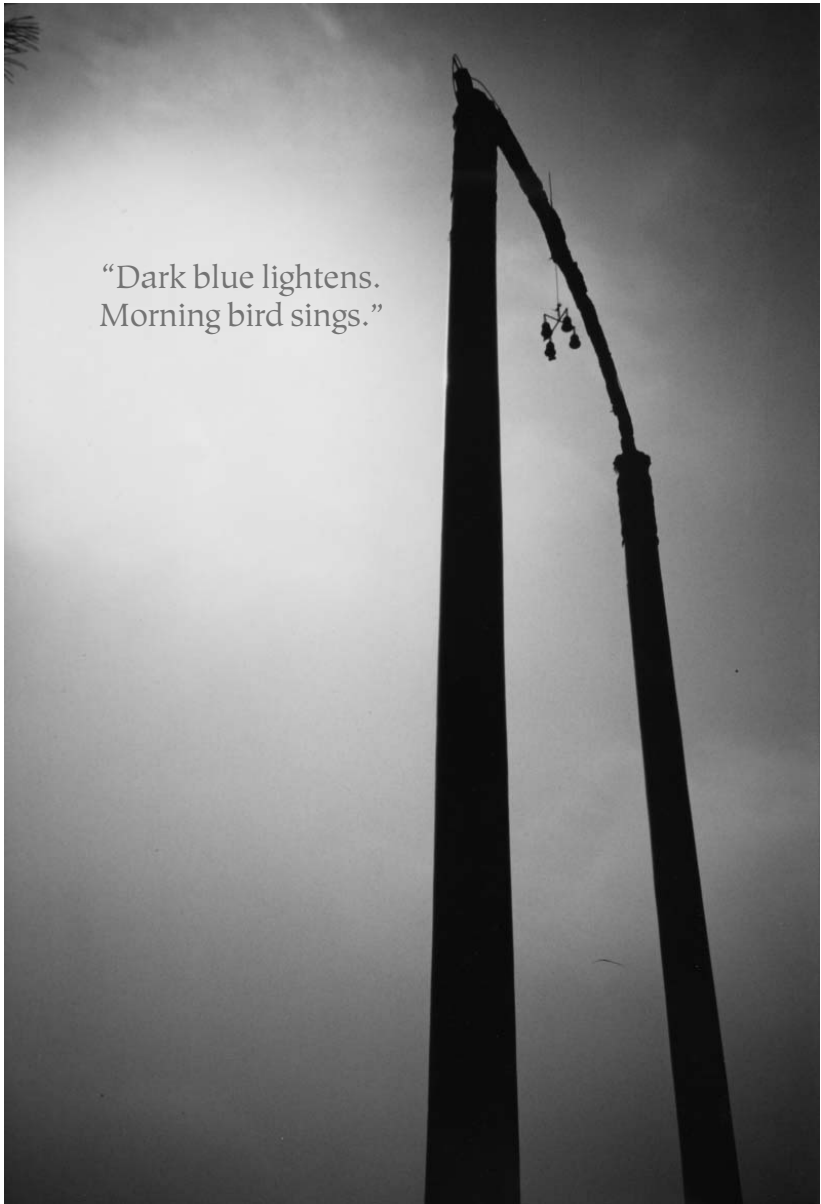


When there is no seeking or groping,  
within or without,  
then the original Buddha Mahavairocana  
breathes in and out through your face.

Now I understand.

The debt to my Teacher and the Lineage can never be repaid. But repayment isn't the issue. The only possible thing to do is what my Teacher and the Lineage did. That is to offer body, breath, speech, and mind to practice and teach others to practice and to wake up to the inherent freedom of their life in this moment.

Gassho,  
Shikai Zuiko osho-ajari  
Dainen-ji  
February 9,2005



“Dark blue lightens.  
Morning bird sings.”

Summer Palace, Beijing, China  
Shikai Zuiko 1991

## **It's Too Easy**

Shuso Hossen Dharma Talk

By Ven. Shikai Zuiko osho

With Commentary by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

Zazen-ji, December 12, 1991

### **Commentary**

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

It's like this: No body, no mind, no time, no space, nothing to be aware of because there is never anything apart from Awareness. And yet it can look like this: bodies and minds and time and space and so here we are.

One way of talking about the timeless presencing of Space, Activity and Knowing exerting itself as this whole moment, always, is to say that in 1979 on this day, my Teacher, Yasuda Joshu Dainen Hakukaze roshi died.

Tonight here we are. Some three years ago, Ven. Joan Shikai Woodward shamini took postulant's vows. After serving the postulancy and two years of training as novice, during the Rohatsu she was acknowledged as a full monk and part of this transition, part of this growth, part of this unfolding of practice, is a tradition called Shuso Hossen. The Shuso is a novice monk who acts as an exemplar of practice who functions as the presentation of the mind of practice amidst the students and then at the end of that period of training the Shusho-shi presents a Dharma Talk to the Sangha.

The passage of time, the passage of moments, the continuity of Dharma expresses itself in the commitment of each of us, the choice to be interested in your lives, to be committed to the process of living, to unfold for yourselves who and what you truly are.

This evening, the Dharma continues.

[Roshi strikes the floor once with the hansaku]

## **It's Too Easy**

[Roshi strikes the gong 10 times, Shikai osho strikes the hansaku on the floor once and begins to speak]

The heart beats; chest rises and falls with the breath, the sound of the heart beating in the ears, the eyes subtly flickering, focusing in and out in rhythm with the heart beat. We sit and we practice this whole bodymind. And then we *try*. We start to *try* to practice.

Practice is easy when we attend to our experience, to the flicker of movement in a muscle, the flicker of movement of attention, the current of experience, thoughts, and feelings, coming and going. That's easy. We don't have to do anything.

"Too easy. That's too easy! I'm doing it wrong. I have to do something."

And so we start to try to practice and that's hard. Not only is it hard, trying to practice is impossible. This moment we are sitting; we can feel the knees, feel the hips, feel the breeze on the top of the head and that's easy.

We came to the environment of practice; we came to the temple through the rain, some of us. We walked in the door. There was the smell of incense and that reminded us why we were here. We came into the environment of practice to ground our practice so that we could unfold our experience more and more fully. It's warm and dry in here. You came through the weather and it was raining. Winter's coming. The garden is dormant. It's resting.

The monks at Zazen-ji are here to provide an environment of practice that can nurture the unfolding of who each and every one of us is. The monks at Zazen-ji, at this time of year, plant bulbs in pots and care for them so that during the winter months we will have, in the Zendo, flowers to

remind us that this unfolding of potential is possible.

Now, we take a bulb in our hand and it's a dry thing. Sometimes we can see a little green sprout. There's a sign of that potential for blossoming. And we place that bulb in earth, we place it in soil and we water it and we give it light. The bulb does what it does. It unfolds its potential in its own time. That's easy. The bulb doesn't have to try to become a flower. It's nourished by the soil; it's nourished by that environment. It's nourished by the water and the light provides what it needs so that its full potential can unfold.

The practice environment, in the Zendo, in the whole temple, is like that. We bring a dry bulb to practice, a dry bulb that has in it somewhere, a knowing, an understanding of potential. We bring it to the environment of practice and we sit. That bulb is present in the current of experiencing. Moment after moment it is nourished by that experiencing. The Teachings provide the sunlight that is needed so that the potential can unfold and flower. That's easy. Just as the bulb does nothing, we need do nothing to practice. We pay attention; we notice that current of experiencing, thoughts and feelings as they come and go provide nourishment for our practice. By paying attention to the Teachings our experience unfolds moment after moment after moment. That's easy. But we can get caught in trying. When we get caught in trying the muscles can tense; the mind tenses; the chatter starts. Practice is difficult. And this can happen in the flickering of a candle.

Just as we know that we cannot make the bulb flower by squeezing it and trying to force it to bloom, we must know that we cannot squeeze our practice and force it because that is difficult. When we recognize that that is what is going on, we release it and sit openly in that current of experiencing.

Now, in preparing for this Dharma Talk, I thought about a topic. What would I say? Self-image came in and contracted and that was difficult. At last I thought I'd found

something I could talk about that was “my own” - self-image, contraction. In talking with Roshi it became apparent that practice is too intimate to be personal. Any of the thoughts and feelings that happen with practice have happened before and before and before, to every practitioner.

When speaking about the bulb in the soil, watered as we are watered in the current of thoughts of feelings, fed by the sunlight as we are fed by the Teachings, Roshi told me a story written a long time ago. I'll read that story:

*“A rice farmer looked out over the flooded fields where his family had just planted the new crop of rice seedlings. He began to speculate on just how much this crop would bring in. As his fantasies grew he became more and more excited. His rice plants would be tall and heavy with grain. Everyone in the village would whisper with awe that he was the favourite of heaven. He'd go to town and buy a huge barrel of sake, clean white sake, not that home-brewed village stuff, and invite the entire village to a feast to celebrate his fortune. He could barely wait for the harvest. In agitation he raced out into the water, reached down and began to tug at the tops of the seedlings to encourage them to grow. When harvest time came, the rice stalks were small and stunted because they had been so badly pinched and the fields yielded only a few bushels of grain and those came from the seedlings that he had missed in his haste.”*

The bulb “knows” that it need do nothing to “try” to grow. It's potential unfolds. That's easy. Practice unfolds. That's easy.

The last line of the “Four Great Vows” is a reminder to us of this unfolding:

“Limitless Awakening I vow to unfold.”

Do nothing.

[Osho strikes the hansaku twice on the floor]

[Roshi]: At this point in the Dharma Talk it is traditional for anyone who might dispute the Teacher's approval of this stage of that student's training to stand up and challenge her in Hossen, Dharma combat. If there is anyone who has any questions, please feel free.

[Shikai osho]: Come you elephants and dragons.

[Roshi]: As we have said for many years, elephants walk slowly in their practice, but thoroughly. Some of us are like that. Dragons burn bright. Some of us are like that. Some of us are strange half-breeds, half elephant, half dragon. We get our wings tangled up in our snout.

Thank you very much.

[Roshi strikes the hansaku three times on the floor to end]



Eiheji, Japan  
Shikai Zuiko 1995



# **The Tiny Book of Stopping and Looking**

A Series of Three Dharma Talks

## **Talk 1: Samatha**

Good morning.

Well, here you are sitting in the Zendo at Zazen-ji, doing our practice; Shojo no shu: realized-practice. The practice of alignment with what is true through opening to experience as it is without manipulation or strategy. Anzan roshi says: *“The root practice is Awareness itself.”*

Dogen zenji says that this practice is the practice of shikan taza. Which means, “sitting exerts sitting” or even “sitting strikes sitting” or “sitting as [Osho strikes the floor]!” Anzan roshi says:

*“Zen does not offer some little technique that one can do. It does not offer some shining bauble that one can play with. It demands, instead, everything that you are in order to receive what Zen offers... Our practice is not about meditation; it is about realization...”*

Our practice is the realization of Aware Space, of Awake Awareness, of Buddha which has been directly and intimately Transmitted from Teacher to student, from Buddha to Buddha. Buddhist meditation on the other hand, is meditation done by Buddhists...and it is very important that we do not stray into this.

Anzan roshi often says, *“It is important that we understand our practice. If we misunderstand our practice, we will practice our misunderstandings.”*

All forms of meditation can be divided into two types:

Samatha and Vipasyana. The *Ratnakuta Sutra* (*Cloud of Jewels sutra*) (*Discourse Like a Cloud of Jewels*) defines these quite simply: “*Samatha is concentration. Vipasyana is analysis of details of experience.*”

Most meditations are samatha. Literally: “*abiding in calm.*” The creation of states of concentration, states of calm. Dogen zenji called this “*self-tranquillization*”.

Vipasyana is observing or analysing experiences, understanding through looking deeply.

Buddhist meditation can involve either, but usually both, with samatha being cultivated as a basis for vipasyana. In Kamalashila's *Stages of Meditation* it says, “*Having pacified distraction towards external objects, one abides in a mental state of suppleness and delights in internal focusing.*”

The suppleness, although it sounds attractive, is mental space folding into itself, folding in like a contortionist. Now this is what we do all the time, not just when we are sitting. This is when attention moves into and focuses on objects of attention.

“*Having this state of calm and abiding therein, one investigates its Suchness. This is called vipasyana.*”

Focusing in and interpreting any particular state of mind as being more meaningful or true than any other state is dangerous; because all states come and go. And approaching practice as a gradual cultivation of particular states, acquiring this and getting rid of that, is an approach easily co-opted by self-image.

Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye in his *Treasury of Knowledge* says that samatha is like the oil in a lamp, vipasyana is like the flame. Thus, first one cultivates samatha and then gives rise to vipasyana. Another take on this metaphor which cuts through the gradualist approach implicit in this, was told to me by Anzan roshi. He said that samatha is the thin shell of glass protecting the flame of insight from the wind of habitual tendencies. They can and should be practiced together. A little samatha is just being sincere, steady. Mostly,

one should just look clearly at what's going on. In Chinese, samatha and vipasyana are called shi and guan and in Japanese, shi and kan .

In both cases they mean stopping and looking.

Now they may sound the same as the shikan in shikan-taza but they're not. And this is important. They are different characters, different meanings, different practice.

Chinese Tiandai Master Zhiyi who died in 598 C.E. presented a very comprehensive body of work on shikan. This was, in Chinese, the *Mo Ho Shi Guan*; in Japanese, *Maja Shi Kan*. And this Roshi translates into English as *The Big Book of Stopping and Looking*.

Zhiyi was later acclaimed as the Fourth Ancestor of the Tiandai school. Seven hundred years later Dogen zenji received Transmission from Rujing at Tiantong si which is close to where Zhiyi's monastery was located. This approach is of interest to us because it is pervasive in Far East Asian Dharma and as a young Tendai monk Dogen practiced shikan on Mt. Hiei (along with such Mikkyo practices as goma).

Zhiyi saw samatha and vipasyana, shi and kan, as the two wings of a bird in flight. In other words they should be practiced together, each informing the other.

Shikan-taza, on the other hand, is the sky the bird flies in.

Samatha is a strategy of avoidance, a focusing and narrowing of attention. Our practice is opening attention, attending not only to what arises within attention but to the very structures that seem to limit and narrow attention. Self-image is always practicing a low-grade kind of samatha; focusing on hope and fear, thoughts and feelings, and blah blah blah.

High-grade or quality samatha would simply result in being zoned out, a zombie, like a kid playing *Super Mario Brothers*.

Shikan-taza is out of the reach of most of us when we

begin to practice because it is the realized-practice of ungraspability. Some elements of samatha and vipasyana or shi kan might constitute some of the baby steps we might walk on this Pathless Path of the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors. They might be like those little blow-up plastic water wings we stick on kids when they venture into the wading pool. Now, we might have to wear them at first when we are flung into the Ocean of Reality transmitted to us through the Teachings, but, as Roshi says, the realization of this practice is to “*drown in that Ocean*”.

Well, my advice is to know that you're wearing them, know how to balance them, and don't worry about it if you get a puncture.

[Pause]

Thank you for listening.

## **Talk 2: Vipasyana**

Good morning.

Can you smell the incense in the air? Can you feel the breeze from the fan on your cheek, on your ear? Can you feel the left hand resting in the right hand? Can you see the seeing? Can you hear the hearing? Can you feel the space around you as bodymind exerts itself in the posture of zazen?

Are you drowning in the Ocean of Reality or are you clutching onto a little bundle of thoughts and feelings and descriptions of what's going on? Let it go...and just drown.

Drowning in the Ocean of Reality means being Reality itself, without separation, without stances or strategy. This is the practice of reality.

Whatever we have understood through this practice, we must practice. Through this, we might begin to under-

stand something of shojo no shu: realized-practice.

Perhaps our understanding was the smallest gap, the smallest hole, appearing for just a moment in the midst of our usualness. Perhaps it was the hissing of air leaking from the little plastic water wings we have used as we have been bobbing about on the surface of that Vast Ocean.

The practice of samatha (calming or concentration) in isolation from vipasyana (insight, looking) is an attempt to hold ourselves still in the midst of the waves, the coming and going of experiences that our lives, inescapably, are. Samatha is attempting to control our thoughts, feelings, states through focusing on the breath, or whatever kind of technique or object our little samatha technique has involved.

Vipasyana, in isolation from really, stably, facing our lives as they are, puts us just as out of balance as a trance state would. Now, by vipasyana, I am not referring to a practice commonly referred to as vipassana. These are different. Vipassana is a Burmese revival of Buddhist meditation that really only has a history stretching back around 150 years. While, in many ways, vipassana is similar to foundational elements of our practice of zazen, in particular the emphasis on mindfulness, it is not the same. Vipassana is concerned with attending to details of experience.

In our practice, the subtle structures of attention and the presumption of locatedness, directionality and so on all must come into question, must be exposed through direct insight.

Now, it is certainly not my intention to critique Theravadin vipassana. Some of what we discuss here about samatha and vipasyana will however no doubt apply. Vipasyana is as Master Zhiyi describes, “*observing, examining, introspecting*”.

Samatha has traditionally been compared to placing a stone on top of a weed, suppressing the weed. The problem

with suppression is that we just save the nastiness for later. The stone will be on top of the weed but eventually there will be little tendrils, little pale bits, that will sneak out from around the edges of the stone. And when the stone is removed the weed will spring up again. Vipasyana has been compared to digging up the root of the weed.

However, instead of direct insight into the groundlessness, the Openness, the luminosity of experience revealing that there is nowhere for the weed to be rooted, often vipasyana becomes a strategy.

The Anzan roshi told me a little story about our stories using this metaphor:

*“To pull out the weed we begin to map out a plan of attack. We map out a diagram of winches and pulleys, cables and packhorses, scaffolding, and a cafeteria for the workers. We become so involved in planning how to deal with the disputes between management and labour and so proud of the craftsmanship with which we have drawn such straight lines on our blueprint that we forget about the weed.*

*“Or we look at the weed. We count its leaves. We measure the angle. We note how they lie in relationship to each other. Or...we count them...add up the numbers, reduce them to a single digit, add it to the original number, double it, then subtract 76.9... And buy a lottery ticket with the results.”*

And as I myself have witnessed, sometimes we pluck the leaves from the weed, wrap them up ever so nicely in raffia...beautiful little bundles... and wave them around our heads to ward off bad juju.

Often, vipasyana devolves into a way of providing ourselves with a story that can explain away our confusion. Now if we have a good enough story, we can feel wise. If our story is maudlin enough, we can feel kindly, compassionate, or even...spiritual. In some cases, vipasyana has been called “looking deeply” when, really, it means looking

away and looking towards and listening to our story.

The story might be that all is dukkha and nothing matters. Or it might be that what is called “I” is “a mere imputation upon a nominal designate which in actuality is the assemblage of the skandhas, ayatanas, and nidanas”. It might be that... everyone is Buddha, so smile, smile, smile.

Whatever.

Direct insight is practiced with the whole bodymind balanced and open. Insight is, in fact, this exposure. Now, the samatha part would be doing this again and again and again in each moment. In particular, when we just don't feel like it. Self-image is always practicing low-grade samatha, focusing on hope and fear, a face, shadows and lights, the flowers in the ikebana, the breathing of the person beside you. As well, self-image is also always practicing low-grade vipasyana: trying to explain itself to itself, to find justification and resolution. To make it all fit. To make a more perfect storyline.

This practice, the one, of course, you're doing right now, is the practice of yourself as you are. It is simply attending to what is going on; seeing what you see, and hearing what you hear. This practice is attending to the process of experiencing as such. It is directly experiencing what you are experiencing. This is what we must understand.

Thank you for listening.

### **Talk 3: Balance**

Good morning.

Traditionally samatha and vipasyana have been compared to the two wings of a bird. As Tiandai master Zhiyi said some 1300 years ago, the bird needs to have both wings in balance so that it can fly properly. The essence of our practice is to align ourselves with what is true about experi-

ences and experiencing. This is shojo no shu, realized-practice. It is the practice of Aware Space, as taught by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin. This is the vast sky in which the bird soars.

States of samatha or focusing arise within your practice. When you fall into them for whatever reason, you don't recognize concentration as concentration, focusing as focusing, a state as a state, and your practice is out of balance. As you learn to recognize concentration states, states of samatha... you can apply what you have been taught to balance them out. The counterbalance to samatha, traditionally, has been vipasyana or insight, clear seeing or looking.

The moment of recognizing that you have fallen into focusing on a thought or on some quality of concentration is a moment of vipasyana. In the next moment, this recognition can become an opinion, a judgement. Vipasyana has then become out of balance and is now the propagation (or prapanca) of a state or a stance.

We really just can't seem to help ourselves. We need to make a big deal out of everything. I guess we're just all drama queens. Propagation or prapanca is such a habit for us. Roshi was telling me something about the Sanskrit word "prapanca". It seems that "panca" means "five". So prapanca means something like "going on about it five times as long as is necessary".

So just stop!... And look! Remember, that in our practice, the practice of Awareness itself, samatha and vipasyana are not strategies. The point is to see how you are; dense or more open, or concentrated and focused, or seeing clearly. And to open to the basic clarity which is always already available past all strategies. In your practice this means seeing clearly the mechanisms of the movements of attention.

[Pause]



In the beginning you can't do that because you simply don't know how. Most of the things that Usual mind, the mind that doesn't do this practice, has tried out before are various and sundry, tawdry bits of samatha. There are many concentration practices that are recipes for the creation of dense states; focusing on the breath, a mantra, an object such as a candle, visualizations, affirmations, ... They come in many disguises; belief systems, belief in a higher self, spirit guides, spirit animals, channeling, and so forth. They come as descriptions such as "being open to the light". They come as dancing, as drumming, as marching, as chanting, as ecstatic states. And people like them...because they suit the project of self-image. And that project is to produce such a dense state that self-image is not aware of itself.

Self-image gets so caught up in the state and its descriptions of and storylines about the state; storylines such as being "spiritual", being "in tune", being "in harmony", being "at peace"... that it is oblivious to itself. Self-image is able to block out, momentarily, its usual repertoire of doom and gloom storylines, wishful thinking and fantasies, petty concerns, claustrophobic anxieties. It is also oblivious to seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, feeling, smelling...the rest of your actual life.

Now this sounds a bit like falling in love or...patriotism...a night at the disco...a good day at the football game... doesn't it? The coin of trade in the realm of self-image then, is basically samatha. And it's a counterfeit coin. It won't buy you anything. Not only will it not buy you anything, it robs you. It robs you of your life.

The other side of that coin is vipasyana. When self-image grabs onto it and stuffs it into its bank of "thingies", it becomes merely a description of "how things are".

Rather than actual insight or clear seeing or looking into the reality of this moment of experiencing, it is a description. It is counterfeit as well. You can't buy and sell Reality. You can't make a deal with it. You cannot invest in it or

save it. It is free, all-pervasive, and rich. None of the strategies of poverty that are intrinsic to self-image have anything at all to do with it.

Vipasyana, when it is misunderstood, is a perfect subject for the manipulations and grasping of self-image. Self-image uses the concept of insight or clear seeing to manufacture for itself a nice bundle of misunderstandings about “understanding” what Zen practice is or what the Actual Nature of experiencing is or how well or badly it is doing. Rather than actually experiencing your moment to moment experiencing, you are experiencing your ideas, thoughts, storylines, about your experiencing. You have fallen into a stance towards, and strategy about, your practice.

Now, this isn't a problem. It isn't a problem because at some point, as long as you continue to do this practice, you will see the movement of attention into stances and strategies. (And if you don't, a Practice Advisor will point it out to you. If they don't, Roshi will have our jobs.)

In your practice, you will experience a moment of vipasyana or clear seeing, or looking. You can't help it. Because despite your counterfeit coins, you're all basically honest.

It seems that for usual mind the noticing of anything at all is done through focusing, through a kind of samatha or fixation. In this practice you will have learned to recognize the narrowness of that and it will strike you as unnecessary. Even uncomfortable. But when you notice the fixation, you loosen it a bit but wind up with just a subtler kind of samatha.

However, through mindfulness, through attending to the narrowing of attention, you eventually wear away the tendency to fixate or to tell yourselves and each other stories about what's going on. Samatha and vipasyana, concentration and insight, focussing and attending, stopping and looking, have balanced each other out. In fact, if either samatha or vipasyana are noticeably present in shojo no

shu or realized practice, our practice is out of balance.

The main thing is not to struggle with it, to try to fix it, to salvage something. In this practice, you can just throw the baby out with the bathwater. Just throw it, throw yourself, throw everything, into the Ocean of Reality. Release whatever has been noticed into the Ocean of Reality.

Through moment to moment attending to the balance of body, breath, speech and mind, we are able to attend openly to experiencing. Through moment to moment attending to the presencing of bodymind we are able to recognize balance point. Knees on the zabuton, your bum on the zafu, hips open, the spine elegantly rising, head balanced on the spine, eyes open, seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, feeling, breathing in, breathing out, recognizing the presencing of balance point...centred...whole...

As Dongshan Liangjie wrote in the *Hokyo Zanmai*, “*The true centre subtly holds the rhythm and song together.*”

The true centre is not something fixed. It is not even something stable. The true centre is Reality. The true practice is exposure, opening.

Thank you for listening.

**ZAZEN-JI, FEBRUARY 1996**



Portrait of Dogen Zenji, Mt Hiei, Japan  
Shikai Zuiko 1995

# The Posture of Practice

A Series of Two Dharma Talks

## 1: Zazen

Good morning.

This morning you walked to the Monastery door. And as you walked, rain drops fell one by one on your skin. If you were paying attention, you might have noticed the sensation as they fell down your cheek, down your forehead, off the end of your nose.

In the back garden, the rain drops are falling on the bright green blades of the lilies-of-the-valley as these tender little shoots push their way up through the asphalt, and sit there in front of the red brick wall, much like you're sitting here in front of the white wall of the Zendo.

Today's Dharma Talk (a Dharma Talk is more informal than a teisho, and addresses more basic issues of practice) is *The Posture of Practice*. And this basic posture of zazen is simple and elegant. It is simple in that there's nothing extra needed and it's elegant in that moment after moment we can carefully choose how we are.

*“Zazen”, Zen Master Anzan Hoshin says in “Four Gates of Zen Practice, A Beginner's Manual”, “Zazen is the practice of attending to experience as it presents itself with and as the whole bodymind. While the mind may wander into thoughts of the past, interpretations of the present, and speculations concerning the future, the body is always right here and now. Thus, zazen begins with the body practicing an upright and attentive posture.”*

As you are sitting, now, with eyes open, facing the wall, feeling the breath as the belly moves in and out with this breath and this breath, are you feeling the fingers of the mudra, the dharmadhatu-mudra? Are you feeling the right hand resting with the wrist open against the right thigh? The fingers

gently curved and cradling the left hand. The left wrist open, resting against the left thigh and the thumbs touching lightly and tenderly.

Are you feeling the left knee where it meets the zabuton? The right knee where it meets the zabuton? Your back side sitting on the zafu?

It is important that your posture be grounded which means that both knees, whether you are sitting in full lotus, half lotus, the Burmese or agura posture, or in seiza, and your backside are grounded so that a stable triangle is formed from which the spine can rise holding the head in the space of the Zendo.

We've spoken of the importance of the triangle of the base, the lower body, to ground and provide support for the rise of the upper body into lightness and balance point.

It can perhaps be useful to, without making a concept out of it, to think of another triangle the base of which is your two butt bones, the "sitz" bones, or ischial crests, and the top of which is somewhere above the top of your head so that as you breathe in and out, you are breathing up as it were, pushing that other triangle so it can rise into and as the space.

I've used the term balance point because Roshi speaks of balance point.

Our practice seems to be unique in the use of this descriptive terminology for the phenomena of balance and lightness that occurs when the posture of bodymind in zazen is attended to in detail, yet openly.

Other texts that I have been reading which speak of the posture tend to describe the posture of the body almost as if, in some cases, we were trying to fit ourselves into what we see in rupa (statues) or into ideas of what a good little Buddhist should look like.

Now, there's one text called, *Sitting: a Guide to Good Meditation Practice*, which approaches the body in a slightly more realistic and slightly more intimate fashion. One of the comments is, and I quote:

*“These days, physical posture and deportment are not especially fashionable topics. Although the benefits of fitness seem to be generally acknowledged, some of the subtler aspects of physical health could perhaps be appreciated more. One such aspect is the relationship between physical and mental health, on the one hand, and physical posture or its kinetic counterpart, deportment, on the other.”*

In the *Shinjin Gatha: Song of the Bodymind*, composed by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin, this matter is clarified very quickly:

*“Body arises as mind.  
Mind arises as body.  
Right here, right now,  
the Way attains itself.”*

Bodymind is the whole way in which experience presents itself as who we are.

By attending to the posture of zazen, moment after moment, we are provided the opportunity to notice how we are and when we see that extras are present, when we notice that we are fixating on thoughts about experiencing, on thoughts about how the body is, on feelings about how we are and about how our life is, at that moment of noticing the fixation, we can simply practice, simply open to the breath presencing in the body. Simply return to balance point, and moment after moment, we are given this marvellous opportunity and very precise instructions as to what to do with body and mind, in this moment, and this moment, and this moment.

In *The Straight Path: Zen Teachings on the Foundations of Mindfulness*, Roshi says:

*“It is best if you can sit in a very stable posture such as a full lotus, or a half lotus, or even a quarter lotus. In the full*

lotus, bring the feet so that the line of the toes is parallel with the outside line of the thighs. In the quarter lotus, just rest your foot on the calf.

“If that is not possible, then you can use the Burmese or agura posture with the legs uncrossed but just folded before you with the knees touching the mat. Or, you can use the kneeling seiza posture. If you have difficulties with the back or some form of injury to the knees, you can sit upright on a chair with your feet planted squarely and your back away from the backrest of the chair. The main thing is that the lower part of the body should be well grounded and the spine upright.

“Allow the spine to rest itself in its own natural posture and bring everything into balance. The head rests evenly on top of the neck, ears over the shoulders and the nose right over the navel, so that everything is straight. Feel the top of the head and allow the spine to lengthen. When you feel that the upper part of the body is straight and relaxed, lean back just a fraction of an inch. Feel as if the spine ended in a tail and that you could rest back on that. After a while, perhaps a few moments, or perhaps many years, you will find a point, called balance point. When you sit in balance point, the upper part of the body feels so light it almost feels transparent, and the lower part of the body is very grounded.

“The hands are placed palm up in the lap with the blades of the hands at the tanden. Rest the back of the right hand on the uppermost heel if you are sitting in full-lotus; if you are using the Burmese or seiza postures, rest the back of the wrists against the thighs, close to the body. Put the left hand atop the right so that the first knuckles of the left hand meet the back of those of the right. Let the thumbs touch lightly. So lightly that a piece of paper can slide in between them but not so far apart that they don't contact. Rest the thumbs lightly, don't arch them up or this will generate tension, don't let them fall or it will be easy to just drift around. This is called the hokkai-join in Japanese or the Dharmadhatu mudra in Sanskrit, which means the gesture of things as they are. Actually, it is a kind of steering



*wheel that will help to guide your practice.*

*“A good zazen posture is one which helps you to see clearly. When you begin to become lost in a thought, you start to lean into it, and you can feel it as a quality of weight coming up. If you are tense, you will notice that the thumbs are pressing into each other. When you start to sink, or your attention becomes lax, or you get sleepy or drowsy, OR YOU GET SLEEPY OR DROWSY [The Osho said in a louder voice to those who were sleepy and drowsy in the Hatto when the talk was given], then the posture tends to collapse, including the mudra, and you can also recognize that as a kind of weight. When you are tense you feel it as a kind of weight. Simply take the weight off and bring it back into the balance point.”*

The balance point can only be felt by you as you sit. It's very tender.

The bodymind is very open, there is a weightlessness, there is a transparency to experiencing and we have to be very careful because as soon as we notice, as soon as self-image notices this weightlessness it tries to grab on to it. It tries to make it into something. It tries to make it into someone sitting in a good zazen posture hoping that Roshi or the practice advisors will notice how well we are doing. At that point, we can recognize we have moved into posturing. Not simply sitting in the elegance of balance point.

It is as tender as the breath. It is as tender as the raindrops on the skin. Anything extra tilts the balance. When the balance tilts, this is a point where in the noticing of the tilt, we can release what is extra by practicing, by sitting up straight, feeling the breath, opening peripheral vision. We can then notice the return to balance point.

Roshi has told the monks a story in which when he was studying with his teacher, Joshu Dainen roshi, Anzan Hoshin roshi gave a description of the body sitting in zazen, in balance point, to his teacher. Joshu roshi was very old at that time, and he exclaimed, *“That's right. That's it exactly. It took*

*me twenty years of sitting to discover that. But I've never had a way of talking about it. As with many things about practice, you're just suppose to find out."*

So we have it. We have this very vivid, precise instruction as to how to notice the details of the experiencing of bodymind moment to moment. To notice the toes and the heels and the ankles and the knees and the hips. To notice the vertebrae. To notice the arching of the spine. To notice the skull, and the arms, and the fingers. To notice the pains as they come and go. To notice when the sensation of pain turns into the concept of pain with its attendant dire consequence stories. And, at the moment of noticing, we can simply choose the simple posture, the elegant posture of zazen.

I'll close with a quote that came from a conversation with Zen Master Anzan Hoshin about simplicity being simple elegance.

*"Simplicity opens into richness. Simplification folds down into contraction."*

Keep it simple!  
Thank you for listening.

**PRESENTED AT ZAZEN-JI ON MAY 11, 1996**

## **2: Kinhin**

### The Dignity of the Buddha

What you're doing now, what you are practicing now, is zazen. It is sitting Zen. Practice while sitting.

Kinhin is walking practice. That's not practice in walking because we know how to walk or rather, bodymind knows how to walk. We don't need to learn how to walk, or do we? Hmm...What is it, really?

The word *kinhin* means *sutra walk* in Japanese. In traditional Buddhist cultures there's a customary practice of circumambulating, walking around sites designated as sacred and reciting mantra or *sutra*. *Sutra* are records of a talk or discourse by the Buddha. A talk about practice. More generally, *sutra* can mean a presentation of Awakened Mind. As we step forth in *kinhin*, we are embodying that presentation of Awakened Mind.

In *The Four Gates of Zen Practice*, Zen Master Anzan Hoshin says, [...] "*kinhin* means to feel a step when taking a step, in other words, to take a complete step."

When the bell rings for *kinhin* and we start to begin to change the posture from the posture of *zazen* to the posture of taking care of the *zafu* and the *zabuton*, to the posture of standing up, often we are not aware of the richness of detail actually present in each of these moments. Often, very often, self-image will have busied itself with thoughts of, "when, when, when will the bell ring? Ring the bell, ring the bell, please". We make deals with ourselves, "Please, let me sit here without screaming. Please, let me sit here without screaming." And we will find that, because of our tendency to believe the stories that arise, we are not aware of the completeness of each moment, but are making a choice to focus attention into one aspect of that moment.

When we stand, when we feel the knees lift from the floor, when we feel the heels touch, when we feel the hipbone rotate in the hip as the torso straightens, when we feel the shoulders fall down and back as we lift the hands into *shashu mudra*, when we feel the breath causing the rib cage to fan out as we breathe in, when we feel the neck delicately straighten to support the head, when we feel the alignment of the ears over the shoulders, the alignment of the nose over the navel, when we feel the eyes widen, when we see the wall on the other side of the *Hatto* in our peripheral vision, when the gaze opens, when we see the colours and forms in front of us, when we step forward, present in this moment, feeling

the left foot lift from the floor, feeling this change in the temperature as the skin of the foot is raised higher from the floor, as we notice the knee joint bending and the space around the bones, as we feel the breath rising and falling, as the foot steps forward and the air rushes between the toes, as we feel the contact of the heel on the floor about half to three quarters of the way down the length of the other foot, as we feel the heat of the skin of the left foot reaching out to the skin of the right foot, we are feeling into this moment. The foot contacts the floor, heel first, then the outer edge of the foot, the ball of the foot and then we feel the ball of the big toe on the floor and the gentle shift in balance occurs.

We are walking without walking. As Keizan zenji said in his instructions about kinhin: *“Walk without walking, silent and unmoving.”*

Anzan roshi has said: *“It is not mindfulness of walking, stepping, or even of a step. It is mindfulness of this step, and this step, and this step.”*

The postural alignment is as that of zazen or sitting. But, we're standing.

The back is straight. The head is up. The hands are over the solar plexus in the Shashu mudra. The right hand is in a loose fist with the thumb and index finger forming a ring. The left hand is over the right hand and the thumb is lightly hooked into the ring of the right hand. The shoulders are relaxed, down and back. The elbows are gently away from the sides. The Shashu mudra for the hands is used for walking and standing and we bow with hands in the Shashu posture as well.

*“Walk without walking, silent and unmoving.”* You don't need to look at your feet. They're there. They are at the bottom of your legs. You can feel the step. You don't need to see the floor to step forward. You don't need to turn your head to feel the person walking behind you. You don't need to look around to see where the other wall of the Hatto is. But, should you notice yourself doing any of these things, recognize that

as self-image distracting itself from this moment and use that moment of noticing distraction, that moment of clarity, to feel the breath, feel the space around the body, feel the step, feel the foot on the floor.

As Roshi says in *The Straight Path*: “*Just do the practice.*” Just do the practice. Just do kinhin. Take a complete step. Notice the richness of detail that presents itself as your life in this moment.

Keizan zenji also said: “*Walk like a mountain.*” Walk like a mountain.

Anzan Hoshin roshi has said: “*Taking a step in mindfulness is itself a presentation of the wisdom of the Buddha.*”

Paying attention to your life is the presentation of the Buddha's wisdom. When you take a complete step, you are stepping directly into the wisdom of the Buddha and uncovering yourself as Buddha. Experiencing the dignity of Awake Awareness is experiencing and expressing the dignity of Buddha, the dignity of life, of your life as expressed by this bodymind in this moment as it steps forth in kinhin.

Anzan Hoshin roshi says: “*Touch the earth as you step out.*”

Quietly, balanced, the breath, the seeing, the hearing, the tasting, the touching, the feeling, the smelling. This moment complete. This moment complete. Walk without walking, silent and unmoving.

Thank you for listening

**PRESENTED AT ZAZEN-JI ON JUNE 7, 1996**

# Life and Death and All That

A Series of Two Dharma Talks

## 1: Ring Around a Rosy

[The Osho sings softly:] “Ring around a rosy, a pocket full of posies. Achoo, achoo, we all fall down.”

Listen, can you hear that?

[Singing again more loudly:] “Ring around a rosy, a pocket full of posies. Achoo, achoo, we all fall down”

“Ring around a rosy, a pocket full of posies. Achoo, achoo, we all fall down.”

[The Osho imitates children’s voices in the distance] “No, it's my turn now, let it be my turn.”

For six hundred years, English-speaking children have been singing this little ditty as they play. You can hear them: Little girls and boys singing. You can picture them: Perhaps at a birthday party, perhaps in the summertime, outdoors. Sunshine falling on their variously coloured little heads.

“Ring around a rosy, a pocket full of posies”, isn't that sweet? And aren't they having such a good time. Singing their little song about death. Because that's what that little song is about. We're told it's a nursery rhyme, a little game for children to play. They hold their little hands, go around in a little circle, around a person who's in the middle, and when “we all fall down”, well we all fell down. The last person to fall down went into the middle and we began the game again.

The ‘rosy’ of the rhyme “Ring around the rosy” originally referred to the red bumps or pustules that would form on the faces of people who had contracted the plague. “A pocket full of posies” was about the pomanders (some of which were oranges with cloves inserted into the peel) and the bunches of lavender or other sweet smelling flowers and herbs that were carried around in pockets or in ‘nosegays’, particularly by the nobility. The aristocrats held their sweet smelling nose-

gays in front of their noses as they went about their daily business through the corpse-ridden, putrid streets of London.

“Achoo, achoo”? Sneezing. Sneezing, a sign, yet another sign of approaching death. If you were sneezing and you had the ‘rosies’ on your body, well, the next thing was that you were going to fall down. Fall down. Go boom. Dead.

Our children's stories and songs have come down through the ages by word of mouth. Their original meaning has been changed or even lost over time. This one “Ring around a rosy” is a sign of, a remnant of, a deception that has been going on for as long, I'm sure, as human beings have been going on.

The deception begins early in our lives. It's part of our human attempt to deal with the reluctance, the recoil, the reactivity, that we all seem to have about birth and death, and life.

I'm dying.  
You're dying.  
We're all dying.

All of us were born without asking, without being asked, without our knowledge or consent. We were all born. Most of us don't remember much about our birth because we didn't ‘know’ it. Not as we know this moment. Not as we can know the feeling of the breath as it breathes in, fans the ribs, causes the shoulders to lift ever so slightly. Not as we can know the seeing of the wall. Not as we can know the hearing of our neighbor's breathing. Not as we can know the feeling of the left hand cradled in the palm of the right hand, the feeling of the thumbs touching. We can know our life. So we can understand how, in a sense, we weren't really present for our birth. We weren't aware of it, as we are aware of this moment. Birth and death arise together. They're inseparable. They arise within and as life.

The day before yesterday, which was my birthday, Roshi

and I were talking about death because of my preparing for this Dharma talk. I had said: "Life and death arise together. They are inseparable." And Roshi wrote the following on my page to make it very, very clear how reality is: "*Death is part of how life lives. Death and life are not opposites or even equals. Death is part of how life lives.*"

Life never dies. You will and I will and everyone else will, but life never dies.

So here you sit facing the wall, eyes open. Breathing out, you breathe out. The breath, the life that was you, dies and is gone forever. As you breathe in the nostrils widen, the rib cage expands, the spine lengthens. You can feel your heart beat. The heart muscle pumps blood through the lungs, the oxygen you have just breathed in passes into your bloodstream and is pumped to your brain, your internal organs, to your eyes, your ears, your fingers and toes, to the skin inside your elbows, to your tongue. Right now you are alive. You can know that. You breathe out. You don't know if there will be another breath. So fragile, so tender, trembling and teetering on the brink of...

One day there will be that final wisp of breath leaving the bodymind. I'll be dead. One day there will be that final wisp of breath leaving the bodymind. You will be dead. And you will be dead, and you will be dead.

What is it? What dies? Who dies? Life doesn't die. What a shame it would be to die without being aware of it. What a shame it is to live without being aware of it. But you're here and you're alive and you're aware of it. You know it. Not as a concept, which is usually how we tend to view it before we begin to practice. Not as the things you did in the little movie you remember of what was going on in your life before you got to the zafu. Not as the little movie that plays itself on and on about the things that you will do after you get out of here, after you get off the zafu. But when you practice, you are practicing this very moment, this life that is living you.

So there you sit, being breathed in and out. The skull, the



spine, the hands, the fingers, the space around the fingers, the beating of your heart: That is your life. And you can know it: When you're practicing. And isn't it amazing, here you are practicing. How did this happen? What did you do that afforded you this priceless opportunity to practice and study your life? To look into, moment to moment, how you are. To find out who you are.

In *Living With This Breath*, a Dharma Assembly on Death and Dying, Zen Master Anzan Hoshin said:

*“When we are intimate with our experience as a whole, with our life as a whole, when we are completely embraced by life, we can begin to come to grips with death. When we can attend to what is, without creating another, then we can begin to look into this issue of death without falling into reactivity. Without trying to console ourselves with mystical promises, and without viewing it as some kind of void. Then we can begin to understand death as part of what life does, as part of the activity of life.”*

Death, the one thing in your life you can be sure of. And most of the time you, but not just you, nearly everybody, wants to pretend that it's not happening. Gosh, you know, our finger and toenails are made up of dead cells. Our hair, that hair upon which some of us spend and have spent so much time and money, is made up of dead cells.

“Timor Mortis”: fear of death, is something as old as human history. Fear of death is fear of something which is the inevitable lot of each and every sentient being, of each and every one of us. We don't like to talk about death in any real terms and yet every day we're surrounded by information telling us in various ways of the deaths of untold numbers of beings, real and fictional. It flickers in front of our eyes. It rings against our eardrums. We pass a newsstand, “278 died today”. Well, we know that's not true. Far more died today than the 278 in that one plane crash. We watch the evening

news, and turn it off with a sigh of relief. Television news watching has become a ritual now, a kind of ritual of affirmation. If we're sitting here watching the news we know that we didn't die on this day because we're watching the body count. "FFFEWH! Made it through another one." Can go to bed safely, be tucked in and hopefully fall quickly into a deep deathlike sleep.

I find it curious that there are no little undertaker kits for kids. We have little carpenter kits, little baking kits, little sewing kits, but there are no little undertaker kits. There are no little 'divine outfits' for Barbie, for going to the funeral. Yet kids want to know about death. They want to know what happened to Sam the hamster lying there at the bottom of his cage. And they want to be told what's going on. The quest for the answer to the questions "what is death?" and "will I die?" and "why do we die?" does begin when we're very young. The answers we get? Embarrassing fabrications and fairy tales such as being lifted up into the blue sky in some sort of loose white night gown and popped on to a white fluffy cloud to play a stringed instrument for eternity. Other responses can be: "Don't ask, just don't ask. We don't talk about it." Or children are told not to worry about it, "you're not going to die for a long, long time."

Death, from the point of view of many scientists and lay folk, in a kind of basic materialist view, is bleak beyond despair and a cause for great anxiety. In practice, in this practice, we're all familiar with the term self-image; views that we have of our self, and how we are, and how the world is. Views, which, if they are fed into, distort this moment of experiencing, distort our life. Self-image spends its whole life acquiring things; Story lines, beliefs, objects, money, love, costumes, masks, and it does this in a vain effort to prove that it exists. That it is special, enviable, immortal perhaps. Considering how reactive self-image is to being questioned about anything for fear of losing what it doesn't really possess (as I'm sure you all know from your own experience) and consider-

ing how anxious you become when you lose a key, or some money, a job, your looks, it's not surprising that the fear of death, of losing everything including your 'self', is so pervasive.

Sometimes our fear is the subject of humour. As Woody Allen said: *"I'm not afraid to die, I just don't want to be there."* It is widely considered to be in very bad taste to joke or speak lightly about death. In earlier times there seems to have been a much lighter touch. In pioneer days, in the colonies in Canada and the United States, tombstones were often blunt in the stories they told. And in this bluntness there was often a touching humour. This, from the gravestone of a child: *"If I am so early done for, what on earth was I begun for?"* And on the gravestone of a 24-year-old woman, inscribed in 1792, was this: *"Molly, though pleasant in her day, was suddenly seized and went away. How soon she's ripe, how soon she's rotten, laid in her grave and soon forgotten."*

Death; something everybody does but no one wants to talk about, especially if it's actually going on in the immediate vicinity. Anger is a fairly common feeling expressed to thanatologists, those who study death and the process of dying. It's fairly common for people who are dying of a terminal illness such as cancer, to have a lot of anger at... Guess who? The loved ones, the nearest and dearest, who either make the dying person feel bad and guilty by crying and carrying on: "Don't leave me! What will I do without you? Oh how terrible!" Or the more optimistic type who insists on making plans for the cruise, for the adventure, the things we will do together "when you're better darling". The patient, the soon to be dearly departed, knows that they are the soon to be dearly departed, and what is being ignored makes them very angry. They are being ignored. Reality is being ignored. But then, that is what we human beings seem to like to do.

Students have asked very practical questions such as what they can do when they are with someone who is dying. What can they do to make it easier for the person that they

are with. Practice, that's what all of you can do. That is what you must do. When you can see your story lines, when you can see where a feeling is turning into a feeling-tone, when you are contracting around self-pity, which has nothing to do with the person you are with, the dying person, you can practice that and release it. Breathe with the person, touch them if they give you permission, hold their hand, wet their lips with ice or water. Just be there and practice. Give them the room they need to do what they must do.

What about if you're at a wake or a funeral? Practice; feel your breath moving in and out of the body, recognize, through having recognized your own capacity for getting into states, the states that people are in, and then perhaps you can be useful. Perhaps there is someone who needs to be looked after, or a Kleenex or a cup of coffee to be brought to someone. Practice.

Find out how your loved ones want to spend the period of time up until their death, if they have a warning of it. Help them do what they want to do.

When you start to fall into your own story lines, your own states of fear about death and dying, the movies about "Oh how sorry they'll be when I'm gone" or "No, I don't want to go. No, not me. Please, please, not me." Practice at that moment of seeing the movement of attention towards the thought, feel your breath rising and falling in the body, see the seeing, hear the hearing, practice this moment of your life.

Roshi says, in *Living With This Breath*:

*"Looking into birth and death means looking into our life and looking at our tendency to self-deception in regards to almost everything that we experience. Allowing ourselves to be honest enough with that, we have some opportunity for really answering it. But the kind of questioning that's involved here, the kind of answering that's involved here, has to be something that we do with our experiencing as a whole, with our whole body."*

Dying is not like being asked to dance. You can't refuse. You don't have a choice. But you do have a choice in this moment. Practice this moment.

As a group, the human race often tries to pretend that it's actually possible for us to live forever. Maybe that's what will happen if we buy enough life insurance. Or at least it may be possible for us to live for a really long time, looking good and, maybe, as if we're only eighteen. It's all nonsense. We were all born and we are all going to die. And, you don't know when it's going to happen so feel the breath, see the colours, hear the sounds, practice this moment, practice your life.

Thank you for listening.

Hum hum, hum hum hum  
Hum hum, hum hum hum  
Hum hum, hum hum  
Hum hum hum ...

[The Osho hums the nursery rhyme and then strikes the floor with her shippei]

***FEBRUARY 8, 1997, HONZAN DAINEN-JI***

## 2: Change

I wonder when it will happen. You never know when it's going to happen, really. You never know when it's going to happen.

'You Never Know When It's Going To Happen' was a childhood game. When I was very little my father would hold me with his big hands, I'd be on his knees and he would raise his knees up gently and put them down gently. And he'd say: "You never know when it's going to happen. You never know when it's going to happen. You never know ..." And Daddy would suddenly part his knees...

"AHHHH, DADDY!"

My stomach would rush up around the heart, the breath would shorten, there would be the falling, the falling, the rushing, the rushing...

When I was a little girl, there were my father's strong knees, the voice I trusted, the hands I trusted. And we were playing a little game. Now, maybe it was a dangerous little game (aside from the fact that I could have fallen on the floor, but at that age we sort of bounce, don't we?)

Perhaps it was setting up some sort of pattern. Perhaps if I looked into this very, very closely, I could be able to find the point when something went wrong. But hold on, hold on. This is now. What can I do with 'never knowing when it is going to happen'? Well, as I'm practicing, as I'm sitting here in the Hatto with you, I can see, I can notice a movement of attention when such a thought comes up, when such a memory comes up. I can notice self-image wanting, wanting to explore content, wanting to create stories, wanting to wrap it all up in one final statement, "Well, I can say in conclusion that" but...there is no final conclusion.

There is just this process; there is really just this process of life. There is just this birth and death of moments of expe-

riencing. This practice demands and instructs, sometimes begs and pleads, that we notice our movements of attention into our story lines. That is what we must do. Things change, everything changes. The weather's changing. It's always changing. Most of the time we're so wrapped up in our stories about the difficulties that we are going to encounter, about the hazards, about the possibilities, about how great it will be when the sun is shining, that we don't notice this moment. We don't notice what it feels like, what it sounds like, as we crunch, crunch, crunch across the ice of the frozen driveway.

Self-image loves its stories and self-image wants to make itself solid. Even dealing with the question of change is seen as an opportunity for self-image to 'wrap it up'. It'll twirl its little mustache, slide its little glasses down on its nose, arch its eyebrow very sagely and say: "Change is the only constant. Yes that's it, the only thing that's ever going on is change. That explains it all."

Now, because we have, in a sense, a product, self-image can assure itself that it understands. Therefore it doesn't need to practice. It can walk around safe and secure in this knowing. But what happens if we should notice that moment of strategy, that stance, and what will happen if we should take the risk and practice that moment? We feel the breath rising and falling. We see the seeing. We hear the hearing. We notice how this contraction of certainty about what's going on starts to dissipate. Things are changing. Now, when things change, in our life, and in our practice especially, when we start to notice how things really are, when we start to notice how we really are, when we start to notice that we are sitting with our little stance of being a Zen student, and when we dare to practice that moment of recognition, things start to open. We start being able to open to openness. Things are changing. And then we experience fear.

Fear. We call it fear but we must remember that that is

just a word, it's just a descriptive word that we have agreed upon as having some sort of meaning. What is this fear? What is this sensation when nameless. What are we experiencing and why? And why won't it go away? Why won't it go away? What is it that we're frightened of? Well if we get asked that: stories, fragments of stories, words, pictures display themselves like paper and dust blowing in the wind. Oh yeah, we can come up with a story. But we don't know.

In *Living With This Breath*, Zen Master Anzan Hoshin says:

*“I don't think that people know what they are frightened of. I think we often find in practice, as our practice deepens, a kind of fear beginning to come up. And we can see that there is a tendency perhaps, for us to be frightened by that. ‘Perhaps I'll have to give up everything if I actually wake up. AHHHK!’ But if you start to look at that feeling, you can see that no, that it isn't so much what you're frightened of. And so you say: ‘Well I'm frightened of this, or this, or this, or this.’ But the fear is basically unconditioned. That is to say, it doesn't really have any kind of reason. It's not really fear of anything; it is just fear. The fear is itself a kind of contraction, a kind of holding. If it can give itself something to be afraid of, then it can build itself up and propagate itself. But, its main function is just to freeze, just to create some sense of barrier between this and that. Just to create self and other, just to create me and the rest of the world.”*

I watched a rerun of Cagney and Lacey, a detective story featuring two female detectives. Lacey, the dark lady, says to Cagney: “Chris, what is it that you want?” Chris Cagney says: “Mary-Beth, I just want everything to stay the same.” And isn't that what self-image wants?

This fear of change, this wanting to make everything solid, comes up time and time again in popular culture, in literature, in how we interact with others. There is a love



song, “Stay as sweet as you are, don't ever change, umm...” Now, who can do that? What happens when you do change? What happens when you cannot maintain that sweetness all the time? And what was it anyway? It wasn't really you because it was something that someone else saw for a moment through his or her own filter. Maybe it didn't really have anything to do with you at all. Self-image: little dictator, trying to control everything. Trying to make everything solid. But, yes, we know; “the only constant is change.” Ahh, we'll just sit with that. We'll just focus on that. Focusing on the content, we do not notice that that is what we are doing. We do not notice that we have created another opportunity for confusion and distortion as attention moves into that content. The context is ignored. And we think we know something. Self-image thinks it knows what's going on, but it doesn't notice itself becoming confused because of the deletion of context. It doesn't know that the seeing has changed, the hearing has changed, the awareness of the seeing and hearing has changed. It's as if it's not there. So we are out of balance.

Practice demands that we notice, and at the moment of noticing any facet, whatsoever, of our experiencing, that we use that moment of noticing to notice what else we are knowing. Over time, we experience increasing openness and of course, more opportunity for fear. Something we call “fear”, to rush in as Roshi says, like the storm troopers, to try to close everything down so that self-image can maintain itself as centre to its experiencing and everything else as fringe.

As Roshi said in the Dharma Assembly *Living with this Breath*:

*“We like to believe that we are the centre of our experiencing, and everything else is fringe. Some parts are closer to us, some parts are further away. It is like our thoughts and feelings are closer to ‘us’ than ‘out there’ is.”*

If we sit here, and look out through our masks, not even noticing that we are wearing them, eyes peering out from behind, seeing everything else as other, we can at that time notice a freezing occur. We can notice this feeling of being trapped. At that time there can be story lines coming up that often are descriptions of how we are and how the world is. We have gotten into the habit, as a collective basically, to call this our personality. So we'll say, "I just have the type of personality that gets really upset when I hear people talking about death." "I just have the type of personality that always wants to do the right thing." "Now, I'm a person who's very jolly, all the time." We are very grandiose and very certain when we describe personality. And we don't notice when we are doing it until we start to practice. And then we will sometimes notice this freezing of space, this talking through the mask, this creation of a self. When we do notice it we are noticing something that is true about how we are in that moment. That is the only moment that we can practice. Ground that moment of noticing something true about how you are, in this moment, using the breath as a touchstone to this moment of experiencing. It becomes increasingly more difficult to maintain this personality.

Interestingly, the word "persona" comes from the theater, comes from Latin. "Per" means "through", and "sona" means "sound". "Sound-through", sound through the mask. In those days in the theater, characters held masks in front of their faces. The masks could not move, the masks, of course, were frozen. The character would be defined by the sounds that came through the mask.

Personality.

We put on our little mask. Most of the time we don't notice it. Then we start to notice it and sometimes it's really embarrassing. And we can experience a lot of, "Well I don't know what it is and I don't know what to do, do I?" Sometimes we'll just laugh and laugh for no reason, as a reactivity. We don't recognize the energy of that laughter as being basi-

cally the energy of bodymind not knowing what to do. But that energy is available for you to practice with.

We set up behind the mask an “I'm in here” and “there's out there” situation. What's out there? Roshi says:

*“Out there, are the colours and forms and sounds. The ones that we love, then there are the people that we don't and so on. It's all arranged in that kind of way with our sense of self as the knower and knowns stratified in layers of importance based upon the three kleshas of passion, aggression and stupidity. But death doesn't quite fit into that strategy, so as soon as some encounter with death begins to come up we seem to freeze it by getting into fear which then places it outside of us so that we can try to maintain it as some level of ‘fringe’. Something that is ‘out there’. Something that is ‘other’. Something that has ‘nothing to do with me’.”*

Self-image, then, can adopt a number of stories that it can put out through the mask. And sometimes we see that. Because we are practicing we see the “I'm in here and everything else is out there”, and we remember to feel the breath, and we see the seeing, and we hear the hearing, and the mask slips. And then, perhaps often, we don't know what to do, and fear comes up again and we forget that that's simply something else going on, something that we can know.

Roshi has been asked many times, “What is the nature of fear? Why fear? Why me? Why am I afraid?” In the Dharma assembly about death and dying, Roshi said:

*“The main function of fear as such is simply to create contraction in order to maintain that sense of centre and fringe, this and that, self and other, which happens at a level that isn't really personal as such. It is not really ‘I'm afraid of losing my thoughts and feelings, and I'm afraid of this and that’, but just a kind of very unconditioned fear.”*

But self-image wants to figure it out. It wants to have a little package of answers for everything, and sometimes we believe that's possible. We believe that if we create or follow a story line, and propagate it, that somehow everything will be explainable. Our lives will be explainable. Birth and death will be explainable. The life that is arising as you will be explainable. Well, none of this is explainable. We can describe it but the description is not what it is because what it is, is arising right here right now as you and can only be experienced. We are asked to 'question into' but the question is a question without words. It is questioning with this whole bodymind into this whole moment.

Roshi says, in *Living with this Breath*,

*"It is important that we not fall for easy answers or become trapped within or by categories when we look into this issue of death and into this issue of life. But there are some things about death that we know for sure. One is that you will die. You don't know when, you don't know how, you don't know where, but there's no doubt whatsoever that you will die and that this breath can be your last breath. Living in such a way that we know that this breath might be our last breath does not mean living with the idea of death. It means living with this breath. It means living with our life as it is arising for us now. It means living where our life really is."*

The room expands and contracts as you breathe in and out. The colours and forms flicker and change. The eyes focus in and out. The body sways forward and we might notice that, we can straighten. Breathe in. Straighten the neck. Feel the mudra, feel those fingers touching each other. Feel the space around the fingers. Feel into this moment of your life. Notice how things change.

In *Before Thinking* Roshi says: *"Each moment that we are living is a process of continual change."*

Isn't that amazing, we can know it. Isn't that wonderful? There's nothing to hang on to.

[The Osho sings] "Stay as sweet as you are." [Osho laughs]

Thank you for listening.

**MAY 1, 1997, HONZAN DAINEN-JI**

# Dongshan's Hot and Cold

A Series of Two Dharma Talks

## 1: Hot

Good morning.

It's a beautiful day isn't it? It's hot, but there is a breeze.

As you were walking up to the Monastery, across the parking lot, did you feel the sun on your face? Did you feel the soft air lifting the hair on your head?

As you opened the door, did you know the feel of the door knob in your hand, of the latch around which your fingers were clasped? Was there a difference that you noticed as you walked into the foyer of the Monastery? Was it cooler? Did you notice that?

When you took your shoes off, did your feet feel different? Was the space between the toes different in temperature from the sole of the foot?

When you stepped from the tile of the locker room onto the carpeting of the stairs on your way to come to the Hatto, did you notice anything about the difference? Or were you busy thinking? Were you busy telling yourself stories about what we might be listening to today? About what I might be saying? About what I meant by "Hot" on the poster?

Did you notice those three little letters: "hot"? Do you remember they were red? And who is that person, that lineage ancestor that Roshi has drawn a picture of on the poster?

Lots of questions. Not just with words. Lots of things to notice in each and every moment.

There are a myriad of dharmas, of moments of knowing, that we know as the bodymind with the bodymind and through the bodymind.

When we talk about "hot" as with most everything we talk about, we don't know what we are talking about be-

cause we're talking about our idea, our idea of what "hot" means.

"I'm hot." "She's hot." "You're hot." "It's too hot." "If it weren't so hot..." And we are not noticing the actual feeling, the actual knowing of the temperature of the skin. We don't know what we're talking about.

Practice teaches us to start to know. To start to know what the sun feels like on our skin. To start to know what seeing a leaf move is.

We try and distance ourselves from the intimacy of experiencing by entertaining ourselves with our ideas.

Even the meaning of words. That word "hot", for example, changes. We may make an assumption that if we say "hot", that we know what we're talking about. That we know the meaning of the word. That word is a very old word. Old English. Old German. Old Dutch. Old Norse. All very similar in meaning of "high temperature". Very warm.

But, colloquially, with popular usage, in 1830, "hot" could mean "well known to the police". Around the same time in Britain, it could mean a penny and "hots" were money.

"Hot" could mean in the 1890s, "much betted on" in racing a horse that was a "hot" favourite.

In the 1840s, we could have a "pot of hot" which would be beer with gin in it. Around the same time, it could also mean a football fight. A crowd.

As a verb, "to hot" could mean to crowd or form a mob.

In the 1860s, as an adjective, it would mean alive, or vehement, as in angry. Very reckless. Careless of decorum. Licentious.

1905. "Exceedingly skillful" entered our vocabulary as "hot". And in Canada, in the 1930s, it meant stolen.

So, just as a word, not even considering the feeling of the air coming across the tongue, of the tongue against the teeth as we form sound and word, we have "hot air, hot stuff, hot line, hot and bothered, hot and cold, hot dog, hot

potato, hot tomato, hot wire, hot seat, hot stuff". But, when we're talking about how we are, do we know what we are talking about?

This question of hot and cold was raised by a lineage ancestor of ours, Dongshan Liangjie. That was in the 800s. He was the Dharma heir of Yunyan Tansheng and this Dongshan's *Hot and Cold* appears in the Blue Cliff Records as Case 43.

***Yuanwu's Pointer:***

*"One phrase commands the universe and is followed throughout ten thousand eons. Even the thousand sages are amazed at an energy which can capture tigers and rhinos. His speech is unequalled. His body is all directions. If you want to deepen your training, enter the master's forge. Tell me, who has ever had such a style as this? Study this."*

***Koan:***

*A monk asked Dongshan, "When cold and heat come, how can we avoid them?" Dongshan said, "Why don't you go where there is no cold, no heat?" The monk asked, "What is this place where there is no cold or no heat?" Dongshan said, "When it's cold, the cold kills you. When it's hot, the heat kills you."*

***Xuedou's Verse:***

*He holds out his hand  
but still  
it's like a ten thousand mile high cliff.*

*Guest and Host are aligned.*

*The ancient jade palace  
reflects the moon.*

*The clever hound of Han*



*runs up the stairs  
but finds nothing.*

**Eihei Dogen's Verse:**

*On your way,  
mindless,  
hands swinging  
in the coming of cold, coming of heat.*

*Drop through body and mind  
and cold and heat.*

*Field Marshall Dongshan  
established this peaceful realm  
but don't let him rest gazing upon it.*

**Mushin Daie's Comment:**

*The place where there is no cold, no heat has no wall around it. The one free of cold and heat has no skin holding anything in or out. A skinless skin-bag filled to overflowing with ice and fire. Who is not like this when they are past thinking about it?*

When we know heat, this is something that we are experiencing. We know it in its difference. We move into the sunlight and something changes. Not just on the skin, but all throughout bodymind. If we are walking in the sunlight for a length of time, the bodymind starts to sweat. Sweating is not a problem. Sweating is what the bodymind does to help balance the metabolism and the physiology. The breeze, even when there is very little breeze or no breeze the evaporation of the moisture from the skin helps to balance bodymind. Sweating's not a problem, but self-image does create problems when there is no problem. It may notice on the brow a droplet of perspiration forming and dripping down the face, "Oh no! It's too hot in here. It's too

hot. Oh, if it weren't so hot... I have to go where it's cooler.”

We don't notice what we are actually knowing. We don't notice what bodymind is experiencing because self-image has created a problem which is removed from, in a manner of speaking, what's actually going on. The bodymind is still knowing its environment, but we're not noticing it. And this produces a sense of claustrophobia. This makes the problem worse. This makes our experiencing dense.

The moment we notice what we are doing, that we have moved attention into a story that has dire consequences, a story about how we are, the moment we can recognize that as a story, we have noticed something that is true about how we are, and that is a moment when we can practice. By noticing the breath moving bodymind, expanding the ribs on the in breath, we notice the back may straighten itself at that point because we are actually noticing something about how we are. There may be some sweat trickling down our back. What does that feel like? No, no, I mean really, really, feel it.

About a week or so ago, a person came to see me. I asked this person how her week had been since the last time that I saw her and she said, “It was wonderful. It was just wonderful. You won't believe what happened to me.”

I had no idea what she was going to talk about. But obviously, it had made her very happy.

She had been in her garden weeding. The temperature had been high that day and the sun was beating down. She noticed that she was starting to feel tired and a little confused. And she noticed there was a story about how if she stayed out in the sun, this and that might happen to her. At that moment, she told me, she actually felt perspiration running down her face. And she took the time, she took that moment to feel that. She didn't do anything about it. She didn't have to. She continued on with what she was doing. She noticed that when she noticed the perspiration that she wasn't as hot as she was before. And she realized that she

had been causing herself a lot of problems with her stories about how hot she was. By noticing what was actually going on, there was more room. She was amazed. She said, "I'd never noticed this before in my life". She was sixty.

We spend most of our time not noticing our life but noticing our stories about our life. When we notice the details and notice the space around the details of experiencing, we notice the spaciousness of experiencing, the spaciousness of our life, the spaciousness of reality.

Now, I'm going to read from Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's commentary on the koan. And first, the koan again.

Dongshan's *Hot and Cold*:

A monk said to Dongshan, "*Cold and heat come. How can we avoid them?*" Dongshan said, "*Why don't you go where there is no cold or heat.*" The monk said, "*What is this place where there is no cold or heat?*" Dongshan said, "*When cold, be killed by the cold. When it's hot, the heat kills you.*"

Anzan roshi's comments: "*Cold is completely cold. Heat is hot. It is not that you can't rub your hands together and blow on them. It's not that when it's hot, you can't rinse your face in cool water. It is that hot is hot. Cool is cool. Cold is cold. Cold never escapes cold. Hot never escapes hot. Experiencing cold is cold. Experiencing hot is hot and there is nowhere to go. There is no escape. There is just this presencing. This activity which is sometimes hot, sometimes cold, sometimes alive, sometimes dead. You are only truly alive when the cold is so cold it kills you because there is no one to be cold. There is just cold.*"

Dogen zenji says about this, "*Cold is the alive eye of the Transmission. Heat is the warm skin and flesh and bone and marrow of the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors.*"

Anzan roshi says, "*There is no escape because there's nothing to avoid. There is just this primordial freedom. Zazen, kinhin, oryoki, teisho, dokusan are just how we dance to the rhythm and song of reality.*"

Anzan roshi's comments were from *Rhythm and Song*, a teisho series.

Notice how you are. Notice how you are in your fingers and toes, and your knees, your ears, your nose, your back. As you walk around the Hatto in kinhin, feel the difference as you raise the foot and then place it down. As you walk under the lights, feel the difference from walking in the shadow. Feel into this moment, and this moment.

Hot. Hot. What does this mean?

Thank you for listening.

**AUGUST 15, 1997**

## **2: Cold**

First,

### ***Yuanwu's Pointer:***

*“One phrase commands the universe and is followed throughout ten thousand eons. Even the thousand sages are amazed at an energy which can capture tigers and rhinos. His speech is unequalled. His body is all directions. If you want to deepen your training, enter the master's forge. Tell me, who has ever had such a style as this? Study this.”*

### ***Koan:***

*A monk asked Dongshan, “When cold and heat come, how can we avoid them?” Dongshan said, “Why don't you go where there is no cold, no heat?” The monk asked, “What is this place where there is no cold or no heat?” Dongshan said, “When it's cold, the cold kills you. When it's hot, the heat kills you.”*

### ***Xuedou's Verse:***

*He holds out his hand  
but still  
it's like a ten thousand mile high cliff.*

*Guest and Host are aligned.*

*The ancient jade palace  
reflects the moon.*

*The clever hound of Han  
runs up the stairs  
but finds nothing.*

Zen Master Anzan Hoshin says, “Cold is completely cold. Heat is hot. It is not that you cannot rub your hands together and blow on them. It's not that when it's hot you can't rinse your face in cool water. It's that hot is hot. Cool is cool. Cold is cold. Cold never escapes cold. Hot never escapes hot. Experiencing cold is cold. Experiencing hot is hot and there is nowhere to go. There is no escape. There is just this presencing. This activity which is sometimes hot, sometimes cold, sometimes alive, sometimes dead. You are only truly alive when the cold is so cold it kills you because there is no one to be cold. There is just cold.”

What is this cold to the usual mind? This cold can be taken to mean an object. It can be taken to mean a knower that is experiencing this cold. That is this cold or this hot. But really, is there one thing that is this cold?

When you experience cold, is it the same cold all over that you are experiencing? When a drop of rain falls down your nose on a cool morning like today, is that cold, that coolness, felt all throughout the bodymind, all around the bodymind? Or is there that moment of the perception of cold? Is there cold inside? Is there cold outside? Is there an outsider inside to be cold? Is there someone there to be this cold?

In *Shunju: Spring and Autumn*, a teisho in Dogen zenji's *Shobogenzo*, Dogen says, “*When it is cold, be completely cold. When it is hot, be completely hot. Examine closely the meaning of hot and cold.*”

“Cold”, Dogen says, “*is the lively enlightened vision of the patriarchs. Hot is the warm skin and flesh of our predecessors. How should we study hot and cold when we live with an old Zen master? Look into this.*”

As we practice, as our practice matures, we experience moments when we recognize the truth of what Roshi is always saying, “*Nothing that is known is Knowing itself. There is no knower who knows this knowing. There is just Knowing*”. There is a knowing of temperature. There is a knowing of cold and of hot. There is a knowing of a movement of attention and there is a moment when we are able to practice this knowing and to open past the contractions of usual mind, the contraction that is attempting to create a knower. When this happens, we experience the cooling of the flames of the kleshas of passion, aggression and stupidity. We open further into the spaciousness of experiencing as it is, to the spaciousness of practicing ourselves as we are. This openness, this vastness, this vividness of the experiencing of hot, of cold, of the movements of attention, of the breath breathing us in and out, can cause self-image to generate a story that somehow perhaps what we are experiencing is a distancing from experiencing itself. That somehow because we are not experiencing the heat of contraction as a definition of who we are, that something is wrong.

As we look into this matter of hot and cold, coming and going, birth and death, we can see the vividness of this experiencing. We can experience cold as cold in the vastness of this moment. We can know the impossibility of distancing our experiencing from our experiencing in this moment. We can practice these moments of hot and cold. This moment of breath. This moment of how we are.

As Anzan roshi says in his commentaries on the koan,

*“Experiencing cold is cold. Experiencing hot is hot and there's nowhere to go. There is no escape. There is just this presencing, this activity which is sometimes hot, sometimes cold, sometimes alive, sometimes dead. You are only truly alive when the cold is so cold it kills you because there is no one to be cold. There is just cold.”*

Thank you for listening.

**AUGUST 23, 1997**



Eihei Dogen's stele, dedicated to Eihei Dogen zenji  
 Tiantong-si, China  
 Shikai Zuiko 1991



# The Four Great Vows

A Series of Four Dharma Talks

## 1: All Beings

[Following three strikes of the gong, the Osho chants *The Four Great Vows* in Japanese and then in English]:

### *Shi Gu Sei Gan*

SHU JO MU HEN SEI GAN DO  
BON NO MU JIN SEI GAN DAN  
HO MON MU RYO SEI GAN GAKU  
BUTSUDO MU JO SEI GAN JO

[One gong strike]

*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.*

[Three gong strikes]

The *Shi Gu Sei Gan: The Four Great Vows*, is chanted in this monastery and in many, if not all, other Zen monasteries to end formal sittings. Here at Dainen-ji, we chant this at the end of the formal sitting in the morning and we chant it at the end of the formal sitting in the evening. We chant *The Four Great Vows* during sesshin, at the end of oryoki. Some of you have attended the formal sittings and some of you have heard *The Four Great Vows* chanted before. And some of you have chanted *The Four Great Vows* yourself or with the Sangha. For example, *The Four Great Vows* are chanted by students doing retreats.

Chanting, of course, is a form of practice and, as with any of the forms, chanting is an opportunity to align body, breath,

speech and mind with the Teacher and the Teachings, the Lineage, and with this moment. This Saturday morning we are in the Hatto at Dainen-ji. The Hatto is completely full today; every zabuton and zafu is occupied and we are sitting zazen.

Now if zazen were all that there were to practice then that would be convenient. Zazen is essential to practice but it is not the only form. As associate students and general students you are already familiar with other forms of practice: you are familiar with kinhin, practice whilst walking or walking practice; you bow in gassho monjin at the entrance to the Hatto, yet another opportunity to see how you are. Chanting practice is a bit different in that what we're doing is making sounds and, although Anzan Hoshin roshi has said that we could chant the phone book and still make very good use of that form of practice, we actually chant, particularly in the case of *The Four Great Vows*, words which actually show us what it is we are doing when we are practicing, actually instruct us in how to practice.

Our topic is *The Four Great Vows*. I hope that it will be useful to start by explaining what *The Four Great Vows* are not. *The Four Great Vows* are not a creed, they are not a dogma, they are not an article of faith, nor are they prayers or hymns. This is a vow and a vow is a solemn promise to do something. In the case of this practice, each time we chant or hear *The Four Great Vows* we are vowing to practice and Wake Up to who and what this is, to who and what this life that is living us all is.

*The Four Great Vows* provide us with instruction and a reminder of that instruction, a reminder of what we are doing. Now, what we understand of *The Four Great Vows*, of course, will depend on what we understand of practice. Zen Master Anzan Hoshin's understanding and practice and expression of *The Four Great Vows* will necessarily be vaster than yours. Next year or perhaps if you become a general student or a probationary formal student or formal student or take lay monk's vows, you will be doing this because your understand-

ing of the vows is deeper and therefore your understanding of your practice is deeper. And because your practice is deeper, your understanding of what is being spoken of each time you hear *The Four Great Vows*, is deeper and different and vaster. Something that I believe to be the case is that each one of us sitting here has come to practice, has sought instruction because there was a realization of the truth of *The Four Great Vows*. We may not have known what the words were but there was something that we knew, that when we hear *The Four Great Vows* makes us perhaps go “Yes! Yes! That's it!”

It would be useful at this point if we were all to have a look at *The Four Great Vows*. So if you direct your eyes down you will see your chanting text. Please notice how the chanting text is placed so that you can return it to exactly the same place so that you do not cause anyone else, the next person to come along, any entanglement because of how you have had a lapse of attention. Now lift the text up and turn to page 15.

[Students pick up texts]

So we will just read through this. I will read and you can follow along just with your eyes.

### ***Shi Gu Sei Gan***

*SHU JO MU HEN SEI GAN DO  
BON NO MU JIN SEI GAN DAN  
HO MON MU RYO SEI GAN GAKU  
BUTSUDO MU JO SEI GAN JO*

And in English,

*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.*

Now you can put your text down and should you attend a formal sitting you will know how to pick up the text. You will know that the text should be placed so that the cover without the printing on it is facing out and you will know that page 15 is the page upon which *The Four Great Vows* is printed.

As you also know from reading *Before Thinking* and in particular Anzan roshi's teisho *Five Styles of Zen*, the fourth mode of Zen practice is "Daijo Zen" which is the practice of the "Mahayana" or the "Great and Open Way". As Anzan roshi says,

*"This way embraces everything that is arising for us and is not simply concerned with our own liberation but recognizes that the liberation of all beings is inseparable from our own because we are inseparable from all beings and work for that liberation."*

The whole of the Mahayana is embodied in the *Shi Gu Sei Gan: The Four Great Vows*. But you don't just memorize them then spout them forth. As Roshi says, we embody them. We are those vows; that is what we do.

Today we're looking at the first line, the first vow: "All beings without number I vow to liberate." And that raises questions. It shows that in the Mahayana, the Great and Open Way, practice is not just for your own benefit but it is for the benefit of all beings. Now we do understand that how we are - how you are - affects everybody else and the way everybody else is affects us - affects you - and there is no clear line separating us from everything else. There couldn't be. Someone twitches in the Hatto and we feel it. We might twitch as well. Someone breathes next to us and we find ourselves affected by it. We notice a presencing of experiencing, a movement of knowing. Perhaps we notice ourselves becoming edgy or irritated. Our attention starts to move towards that and we find ourselves becoming

something or something coming into being; something that's irritated.

The first great vow reminds us that “All beings without number I vow to liberate”. At the moment of noticing that becoming, that coming into being of a separate self, a self that is separate from everyone and everything else (which of course is impossible; each thing does make everything else what it is), at the moment of noticing that becoming, that coming into being, we have noticed something about our experiencing and we practice mindfulness of breath in that moment. As attention ceases to move towards that being, that becoming, that being is liberated, it is released. All other beings in the Hatto are of course liberated from the possible effects of that irritated being. Moment after moment we practice *The Four Great Vows* for just as all the Mahayana is contained in *The Four Great Vows*, all of practice is spoken of in each Great Vow and each Great Vow speaks of the other three. They are all talking about Awakening, about Waking Up, about recognizing that you are Buddha in this moment and this moment and the next.

Continuing our investigation of the first of *The Four Great Vows*: “All beings without number?” Wow! Is that even possible? Now hold on! What exactly is a ‘being’? OK, I can understand the movement of attention into becoming something that is irritated at the person next to me...”

But that's not all it is. It can also mean recognizing when someone else is stuck and offering our help, knowing that perhaps they have other things to do which you can't do, and doing what you can do, can help free them, can help them do something else that will be of benefit to someone else. So it reminds us to pay attention to those around. But it also means paying attention to anything, any presencing, any moment of knowing - colours, forms, sounds. They come into being and then are gone. We can't hang onto them. By noticing we can only liberate. By noticing and practicing we can notice that there is more and more available to us.

Practice is also about taking responsibility. Taking responsibility means looking at what we do and how we do it and looking at how we are. There are many facets to this taking responsibility and to this liberating of beings; it's not as simple as it sounds. In the newspapers recently there have been a number of articles about laboratory animals. Now, liberating beings doesn't mean storming a lab and releasing the lab animals and indeed, when we think about it, we can recognize very clearly that that can cause more suffering for the very creatures whose suffering we wish to ease. By releasing animals into a world of which they have no knowledge we perhaps are putting them at greater danger.

There is a story that I heard some time ago and it was about a chimpanzee. This is when there was a lot of money available in the United States in particular for interspecies study and the study of the communication between species. There were chimps who had been taught to sign.

One particular chimp, Lucy, had been, since she was very young, in a lab with her person. And this person was like a mother to her, had raised her, cared for her, and taught her language. Well, the money ran out and the experiment came to an end and the people and the person who had raised and cared for and taught Lucy decided after a great deal of thought, because they were certainly not uncaring people, that the best thing for all concerned was to send Lucy to a retirement camp, a camp specifically for chimpanzees who had been retired from labs and from zoos and other human endeavors really, in her country of origin which was in Africa. Lucy had a very difficult time and the reports were that although the other animals were of her own species, they were strangers to her. They were savages and, by her standards, illiterate. So she took to hanging about the periphery, near the fence, spending most of her time alone. And she was there for about six years.

The person who had cared for her, came to that country to visit and they went to see Lucy. Lucy saw them and imme-

diately recognized the woman who had cared for her. Lucy went over to the fence and looked at her with pleading eyes and signed to her: “*HELP – HOME.*”

We must be very careful of everything that we do. We need to understand what our practice is because, as Anzan roshi says, “*If we do not understand our practice we will practice our misunderstanding*”. With the first great vow, “All beings without number I vow to liberate”, you have a template; you have something that you can use during this coming week to look at how you are, how beings are, to notice interactions that you may previously have not noticed.

*The Four Great Vows* are useful for what they are not, because what they are not teaches us. *The Four Great Vows* are not rules, they are not there to help you generate a feeling-tone about being a person who liberates beings; they are not a strategy of how to be. They are instruction. Each of the Great Vows is talking about the same thing; releasing colours, forms, sounds, thoughts, feelings, all beings, into liberation. Practice is growing up, taking responsibility for being a real human being.

Roshi says in *Five Styles of Zen*, “*Being human means dignity, compassion; realizing that one's life is the life of all beings.*”

Next week we'll look at the second of *The Four Great Vows*: “*Endless obsessions I vow to release.*”

Thank you for listening.

[With three strikes of the gong, the Osho chants]:

*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.*

**DAINEN-JI, OCTOBER 18, 1997**

## 2: Endless Obsessions

Welcome. You've come back! And for the same reason you came to practice in the first place. There was recognition of the truth of the Teachings, the truth that is made explicit by *The Four Great Vows*.

As you walked through the nippy October air there may have been thoughts about what you'd rather be doing, perhaps there might have been an occasional thought about how inconvenient it is to come on a Saturday morning to practice. As I mentioned last week, it would be “convenient” if the only form of practice was zazen. Then, of course, we would only practice when we were sitting. It would be “convenient” if we could isolate practice to something fixed. Anzan Hoshin roshi says that in order for our practice to be the embodiment of reality, we must release our divisions between self and other, this and that, formal and informal practice.

The forms of practice are forms for the practice of reality: Chanting is speaking, kinhin is walking, oryoki is eating, zazen is sitting. The forms are a means to embody reality. *The Four Great Vows* speak of how we embody the open formless space of who we are.

[Following three strikes on the gong the Osho chants]:

*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.*

[Two gong strikes]

As we discovered last week, one way of looking at *The Four Great Vows* is to see that each vow speaks of the same thing but in a different way. After last week's examination of the first Great Vow, “All beings without number I vow to liberate”, a student remarked that perhaps the first vow



should be the last because only after releasing obsessions, penetrating Dharma Gates, and unfolding limitless Awakenings, are we able to practice the first Great Vow to liberate all beings. In discussing this, Zen Master Anzan Hoshin said that another way of looking at this matter of *The Four Great Vows* is that the first vow is the fundamental vow to realize who we and all beings are and the next three vows speak of how we do this.

Practice is the practice of our life as it arises moment-to-moment. As Roshi says in *Before Thinking: Beyond Convenience*, “Our life is very simple, very direct, very beautiful, very vast and very terrifying, but it is not at all convenient.”

Your life inconveniently presents itself and practice inconveniently presents itself when you are walking, working, in the bathroom, talking to someone, watching television; not just when you're sitting zazen. But zazen is the form that allows us to look into this moment-to-moment arising that shows us how we are. Because our life is so vast and so terrifying, one of the things that self-image will do is to try to make experiencing controllable in the mistaken belief that it is possible to control our life; one thing that self-image will do is to occupy itself with obsessions and obsessions are numberless.

As the vow states, the second of the great vows: “Endless obsessions I vow to release.” Now, obsession is the act of obsessing or the state of being obsessed. Obsessed is to be preoccupied, haunted, to fill the mind continually, to take control of, to torment, dominate, grip, possess, hold, plague. An obsession is a persistent idea or thought dominating a person's mind. Interestingly, the word “obsess”, which means “beset” or as a “besieging force”, is from the Latin “obsedare” which means “to sit down before.” So it is as though we have no choice but to sit down before these thoughts or rather to have these obsessions sit upon us, making us incapable of doing anything else. We human beings will obsess about anything: body parts, illness, dirt, germs, animals, hoarding, saving, repetition, count-

ing, sexual fantasies, violence to self or other, horrifying images, a sense of unworthiness, a sense of poverty, a sense of superiority, doing things right. These are all thoughts, just as colours, sounds, music, names, titles, numbers, phrases, memories, unpleasant images, impulses to hurt, to harm, saying or not saying certain things, obsessing over needing to remember, over losing things, over the way the person next to us is breathing, are thoughts.

Practice, all the forms of practice, and especially when you are establishing mindfulness practice... zazen... asks you to recognize the reality of the presencing of these thoughts and provides you instruction on what to do. Zazen sits you down in front of what you believe to be uncontrollable, that which you believe has sat you down or sat down on you and immobilized you. By following instruction, by paying attention, you start to know a thought as a thought, a story as a story, an obsession as a thought with a story, and you start to understand because you can know this thought, this obsession. You start to understand, maybe just a little bit and maybe not all the time, what Anzan roshi means when he says, *"There is nothing that knowing can be because only knowing is"*.

You are not that thought or obsession about who or what you are or what the world is. You remember to practice from time to time when you notice the presencing of a favourite obsession because you know you are not that. You feel the breath moving the body in and out, you see the seeing, hear the hearing, know other bodily sensations and that obsession is released into the vast expanse of Knowing. You have embodied the second of *The Four Great Vows*: "Endless obsessions I vow to release".

"Endless obsession" - Endless! Now "endless" can seem to present a daunting, formidable, impossible task. But what it really means is: Don't try to put an end to them; otherwise, you have a story about what you would be, what you would be like, without those obsessions. As Anzan roshi says, *"When obsessions cease we don't even notice because we're not obsessed"*

*with defining ourselves in any way.”*

Next week the third of the great vows: “Dharma Gates without number I vow to penetrate.”

Thank you for listening.

[Following two strikes on the gong, the Osho chants]:

***Shi Gu Sei Gan***

*SHU JO MU HEN SEI GAN DO  
BON NO MU JIN SEI GAN DAN  
HO MON MU RYO SEI GAN GAKU  
BUTSUDO MU JO SEI GAN JO*

***DAINEN-JI, OCTOBER 25, 1997***

### 3: Dharma Gates

The First Great Vow, “All Beings without number I vow to liberate”, states our intention. The second, “Endless obsessions I vow to release”, reminds us of what we are going to do. The third, “Dharma Gates beyond measure I vow to penetrate”, again Teaches us, instructs us, as to what we will do.

*“Dharma Gates beyond measure I vow to penetrate.”*

When we are obsessed, when we are dominated by our thoughts and feelings in a cycle that is seemingly endless, we can feel as if we are sat upon, as if we are squashed by the weight of our obsessions. All we need to do is to sit up; to sit up straight in zazen.

Sitting up straight, Dharma Gates open everywhere; reality presents itself everywhere. Being sat down upon by obsession is like having a monkey on our back, but by just sitting up straight whatever tries to sit upon us just slides off. When we sit up straight in the posture of zazen, in balance point, everything slides off.

Following this thought, that thought, the body bows and sways with the disposition of attention. Coming back to where we are, right now, right here, we just sit up straight without trying to shrug anything off or put anything on. When we sit up straight, richness presents itself; infinite opportunities of the moment present themselves; Dharma Gates. We recognize that how we understand and how we misunderstand are all opportunities to be entered into.

In *The Four Gates of Zen Practice*, Zen Master Anzan Hoshin defines “Dharma” in Sanskrit, “Dhamma” in Pali, and “Ho” in Japanese, as having many levels of meaning. When the “d” is in small case, “dharma”, “dhamma”, means “phenomena, mental events, things, experience”. When the “D” is capitalized, or the word Dharma is used in conjunction with the word Buddha, it means the Way, or the Teachings. Roshi says, in *Before Thinking*, in the teisho entitled *Shamata and Vipashana*, that in Zen

we are concerned with the essence of “Buddhadharma”. “Buddhadharma” means “The Way of Waking Up”: The way of experiencing directly what our life is, and the way of penetrating into what it is that is experiencing it. And so we sit up straight in zazen.

There are so many dharmas arising and falling, moment after moment, that there is no need to measure them or count them. That would be impossible. So, “Dharma Gates beyond measure I vow to penetrate.”

The tradition says that there are one thousand and eight Gates to reality. As Roshi says, “*One thousand and eight Dharma Gates: Why one thousand and eight? Picture one thing. Now picture two things; four things; eight things; sixteen things; thirty-two things. You can't. One thousand and eight simply means numberless, infinite.*” And so as we sit in the posture of zazen, these numberless, infinite Dharma Gates present themselves; colours, forms, sounds, thoughts, feelings, memories, sadness, anger, hope, fear, a pain in the knee.

This third of *The Four Great Vows* calls us to penetrate each dharma, each moment, and we penetrate, we pierce each dharma with this posture of zazen, with kinhin, with teisho. We practice penetrating this moment with the needle of attention, penetrating this moment completely; the breath, sensations in the fingers and the toes, this moment, are all the tip of the needle. Penetrate; pierce so completely that there is no separation between body, mind and moment.

In the teisho *Needle in a Bag*, Anzan roshi says: “*If we pierce this moment of hope and fear with the needle of zazen, with the needle of mindfulness, we are also pierced to the heart.*”

He goes on to say: “*As we stitch together these moments of our lives with the needle of Wakefulness, we will find more and more that everything is unbound.*”

The Dharma, the Teachings of Reality, show us over and over again that reality is so rich. We are provided with endless opportunities to take responsibility for the treasury of who we are, to allow us to express this richness.

*“Dharma gates beyond measure I vow to penetrate.”*

Next week, the fourth of the Great Vows, *“Limitless awakening I vow to unfold.”*

Thank you for listening.

**NOVEMBER 1, 1997, DAINEN-JI**

#### **4: Limitless Awakening**

*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.*

The first of The Vows proclaims our intention to liberate all beings. The second and third speak of what we are going to do and of how we are going to do it. And the fourth, “Limitless awakening I vow to unfold”, reminds us that we will do this without limit, never stopping until all beings are liberated. This progressive relationship between the Four Vows is, of course, an interpretation we might find useful rather than how *The Four Great Vows* are formally structured.

Anzan roshi says,

*“In Zen we are concerned with the essence of Buddhadharma. Buddhadharma means The Way of Waking Up. The Way of experiencing directly what our life is, and the Way of penetrating into what it is that is experiencing it”.*

In *Needle in a Bag* Anzan roshi instructs us to,

*“Pierce this moment of hope and fear with the needle of zazen, with the needle of mindfulness and then, as we stitch together these*

*moments of our lives with the needle of Wakefulness, we will find more and more that everything is unbound.”*

As everything is unbound, released everywhere around as reality, practice must be unbound. Practice is simply seeing this moment, penetrating into this moment, not only on the zafu, not only in the Monastery, but in the street, in our homes, in our workplaces, on the toilet, shopping. Opportunities to practice, innumerable opportunities to practice, present themselves moment after moment. Some opportunities are more attractive to self-image than others. The more attractive, invariably seem to be those which involve content, and the content found most interesting by self-image seems to be in the area of thoughts and feelings, story lines, self-obsessed film scripts, and novels about yourself: “How are you doing? How do you think the other person is doing? How do you think I'm doing? What do they mean? What's going on?”

Most of our day to day activity, however, necessarily involves questions of what to do about our everyday – and by definition – mundane or worldly activities such as shopping, cleaning, laundry, getting dressed, brushing our teeth, eating and shitting.

Did you replace the used up toilet paper roll? Or were you so concerned with your own obsessions about what's going on that you were not even thinking about the next person who may use the washroom? Wake up! Did you leave your shoes askew, directly in the path of the door to be opened by the next person? Wake up! Did you notice a leaf lying on the floor of the entranceway and decide to ignore it? Wake up! Did someone bring you an egg and some toast, and rather than seeing the generosity of that moment did you choose to speak of why it wasn't appropriate? Wake up!

Did you notice a person behind you in the grocery line becoming agitated and irritated and you yourself become agitated and irritated in return thus helping them to propagate their state? Why not let them go before you? Why not just let go? Wake up!

As Anzan roshi says, *“It's everywhere. It is what you are. You are the richness of this moment and this moment, each and every moment is very rich.”*

Each moment presents beings to be liberated, obsessions to release, Dharma Gates to penetrate, limitless awakening to unfold. WAKE UP!!!

“Butsudo”, “Buddhaway”, Roshi translates as “Limitless Awakening”. Why? Well, it's not the Buddha's Way alone, but our Way as well - yours and mine - of Awakening to who we are. We are each and all Buddha. “Buddha”: One who has Woken Up. It reminds us each time we hear the Vow that we must Wake Up. We must recognize when we are dreaming. Butsudo: The Way of Awakening. The Way goes out, limitless, past all horizons. Our Way embraces all beings through releasing our images of “self” and “other”, “this” and “that”, into the limitless and radiant expanse of Reality. Each moment, unfold, Wake Up.

A great bow to the Buddhas and Dharma Ancestors and to Zen Master Anzan Hoshin for the Teachings of the Buddhadharma, for the gift of the priceless jewel of practice and Awakening, for *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.*

Thank you for listening.

**DAINEN-JI MARCH 7, 1998**



# **Being Breathed**

## **a Series of Four Dharma Talks**

### **Part 1**

[Ven. Shikai Zuiko osho in a “Good Morning America” radio announcer voice]

*“Good Saturday morning to you. It's a bright minus 26 degrees here in the capital with a wind chill factor of minus 44.”* But of course you, sitting here in the Hatto, know that because you walked here through the bright morning of the second coldest capital city in the world. As you were walking along, it bit your nose. It pinched your lungs. It reddened your cheeks. It was right there in front of your face. You walked through it. It carried you here through the brightness of morning.

It brings you light from the candles and scent from the incense. It bows. More intimate than any lover could be. Stronger than a bull, bigger than an elephant, it supports the earth and gently moves as you.

Now in a little while, we'll have practice interviews and The Question will be asked, “How is your practice?” And you've all had differing experiences of what happens when those sounds are heard.

This story, a short story that I am going to tell you, is not about one student but rather it is a compilation. The densho rang. I rang the gong in the Zendo. The student opened the door, bowed, and walked towards The Seat. We bowed and the student sat down. The student took a deep breath, waiting.

“How is your practice?” I asked.

The student gulped, gulped again, reddened, and said, “I never...I don't know...but at home...earlier this week...I

noticed that my breath was moving in and out of my body and that it was the air in the room. I noticed my cat was breathing...the same air...my friends, my mother, people I loved, people I would never know...all breathing the same air...and then I got scared...it was too big!" The student stopped. Eyes looked around.

"What did you do then?" I asked, "When you noticed you were scared..."

"Aahaa..." There was a long pause. "...I tried...no, no, that's not right...I noticed the breath?"

"Yes?"

"I saw that being scared was really a thought...and then...I noticed the breath. I felt the breath. At the tanden."

The student had recognized something that was true about how they were in that moment which was long gone, and what they were experiencing in this moment. Yes. The student felt the breath at the tanden moving the body in and out and said, "And I remember I wasn't afraid then and I'm not afraid now..."

The student had practiced that moment of clear seeing; by making a choice to feel the breath. Rather than propagating the story about being scared, the student practiced. And this practice is about, of course, noticing how you are in this moment.

A long, long time ago, I lived in the country with my family and our family business was caves. We didn't manufacture them. We took people on tours. We were in the tourist business and this business was five miles from anywhere. As a ten-year-old unwaged tourist guide I didn't even have a bicycle. So for recreation, after walking through the caves, talking about them to people, I would go and lie on my back

on the limestone near a waterfall. That limestone, I knew, was four hundred million years old. Four hundred million years ago that limestone was mud at the bottom of a tropical sea. Hard to believe, isn't it? I would lie on my back looking at the sky. I breathed in and breathed out. Noticing breathing in and breathing out, I knew that the sky, the breath, the rocks, the flight of swallows following currents of air around the descent of the waterfall were this moment. I knew I was simply a part of it, no more, no less.

Thirty-five years later I was in the Zendo at Zazen-ji when Anzan roshi spoke of the intimacy of our lives in a Dharma Talk for his associate and general students that was later called *The Sky Talking*, he pointed out what I had recognized then and pointed further. The sky moves through breath, is present in the breathing out of every word we say and hear, moves up as far as the blue of the sky and into the deepest cave. We are not just a part of this. This all-pervasive context, this vast activity, indicates something of the vastness which we all are. Sky, breath, bodies, minds, you, I, are just part of what we each are. I vow to bear this in mind in what I say and hear. It will be difficult to remember it always in each moment. But each moment shows this so I have only to allow it. As do you. Here is a poem:

*this breath  
explodes space  
this thought  
this non-thought  
forms, forms,  
sounds, sounds  
at this moment  
what else but just this*

This is how Zen Master Anzan Hoshin expressed this moment of practice in *The Sky Itself: Poems on Zen practice*, published in 1986. At this moment what else but just this?

What a question! Answer it with this whole bodymind in this moment.

Here we sit in the Hatto of Honzan Dainen-ji, the main monastery of the White Wind Zen Community. We sit here in this moment being breathed. Listen...you can hear the sounds from your bodymind as the ribs rise and fall, the spine straightens and maybe snaps and pops with the life that is living as you. Beside you and behind you are other sounds; sounds of bodyminds being breathed. There are coughs and sighs, and swishes and swooshes, and the sound of the fan. Are you paying more attention to the breath of the person beside you or to the breath moving across my vocal chords than you are paying to the breath breathing you?

Balance it out...now. At this moment practice just this.

[Pause]

Isn't it funny that we talk about “my breath” and “your breath” and “the cat's breath”? As if we could stake a claim on something that we literally cannot hold. As if we could mark it and keep it separate. And on those increasingly frequent occasions when we do notice the breath for a moment, judgment arises. “Aaah it's too fast, too shallow, too loud.” Well, too bad. Let's not settle for our puny little stories. Come on; let's have a look at what's really going on.

Picture the earth as seen from way, way up in space. We're incredibly lucky. We've all seen the earth from space in films, on television, or in photographs. I'm amazed every time I think that I was amongst the first generation that has actually been able to see our home from space. The beautiful blue pearl turns in space. As we move closer, space becomes sky. As we penetrate the cloud cover and get closer to the earth, we are able to breathe the air unassisted. Just as fish are at home in the water, we air-breathers are at home in the sky. Sky becomes breath; breath becomes sky again.

This morning, January 22nd, at the formal sitting, we chanted a memorial for Hanamatsu Daiji Tenku daiosho, your great-grandfather in Dharma. The “Tenku” in his name means “ku” or “empty”, “ten” or “sky”. “Tenku” – “empty sky”. This is from the memorial we chanted.

[Osho reads from the Memorial to Daiji Tenku daosho composed by Ven Anzan Hoshin roshi ]

*“In deep snow, in cold wind, your voice sounded forth, striking the sky and setting it ringing. Awakening all beings to the Actual Nature, you blazed in silence as the Great Acala. With the hammer and tongs of Great Compassion you forged Buddhas and Bodhisattvas out of whatever came to hand and set them spinning like suns for beings to find their orbit around them.”*

*Throughout war and devastation, you sheltered the lamp of luminosity. Its light shines even now and lights up our faces, our eyes. It is because of you that we can see.”*

The Lineage speaks as the sky. Many hundreds of years ago Zen Master Dogen in *Jippo* wrote, *“The ten directions are the breath of the Awakened Ones. This is the point of our practice.”*

Zen Master Dogen never saw the earth from the sky but he said that this breath is the point of our practice. The only place our practice can occur is wrapped around this breath in this moment. You may as well notice it. It is, after all, your life.

The world turns in space and we can know that at this moment, it is night-dark somewhere. It's bright at ten o'clock in the morning here in the Hatto but it is, nevertheless, this moment everywhere. In a cave under the earth, there may be total darkness. No waves of light may penetrate to the retinas of beings and there may be no seeing. In other darkness, some light waves travel through the air and some beings can see to hunt. In the bright daylight on the other side

of the globe, we sit in the brightness of the Hatto facing a white wall. Waves of light move and touch our retina creating images and light and dark. Light waves move through the air we breathe.

Sound waves move through the air being breathed as you and you and you. A voice, sound waves of a certain amplitude created by the movement of air over the flesh of the vocal cords, travels through the air of the Hatto and strikes your tympanic membrane, making sound. Scent molecules travel through this air and you can smell the incense and taste your own breath. Warmth from the radiators travels through the air and strikes the skin and we feel hot. Walking in kinhin, we can feel colder air beneath our feet.

We sit in the air being breathed. Walking, we move through the air as we are being breathed. The air moves through us as breath. The air, the breath, is the context of all our experiencing. Without this breath, without this air, there can be no experiencing. In this Hatto, in the monastery, the city, the country, the world, the air is the context within which content arises. The content may be called weather, rain, snow, rocks, rivers, dogs, or people. The content may be called seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, feeling, smelling and thoughts, but it can all only arise in this moment of breathing in and out. You may as well notice it. It is your life.

Thank you for listening.

**MAY 11, 1996**

## Part 2

At the beginning of the sitting round when the gong was struck we all bowed and exhaled in the same moment. The gong rang again. We straightened and the air entered each and every one of us at the same time. Another strike on the gong and, as if one exhalation in this moment, breath dispersed and mingled with the air in the Hatto.

Zen Master Anzan Hoshin told us In *The Pivot*, one of the *Saturday Morning Talks* series given for general and associate students during the late 1980's and early 1990's, that,

*“In the moment of breathing out,  
There is just each moment of the out breath.  
Each moment being this moment,  
This moment displaying itself as breathing out.  
There is a slight pause,  
It is ever so slight,  
A slight trembling,  
And then,  
Breathing in.  
And each moment of breathing in is this moment.  
Each sound that is heard,  
Each sensation that rises and falls,  
Is the activity, the turning of this moment.  
You and your world are arising here.”*

You listen to me repeating Roshi's words or you might have listened to the tape and at the moment of hearing it's so clear. “Aha! Yes...of course...! At THIS moment it is so clear isn't it? I understand.” Feels good.

You congratulate yourself. You pat yourself on the back because you understand. You think all the effort really has been worth it. “Yes!” you say to yourself as you are seduced by the “good” feeling, the “good” thoughts. “Yes, now I am really practicing.”

Excuse me? Excuse me!

You have forgotten the breath. You have forgotten to notice a thought as a thought.

“Oh no!” self-image declares, “not again...I thought I had something there.”

Wait...Wait... Don't follow it. This isn't a problem even though self-image will try and make it one because that's really its only job. Anzan roshi says,

*“Breathing in turns to breathing out.  
Holding a feeling turns to holding a thought,  
Turns to holding another thought and another thought.  
The thoughts rise and fall,  
Turning in the light of Awareness,  
Turning in the knowing of them.”*

You see, you're not the only one in this Hatto who gets lost in thoughts and feelings; nor are you the only one in this Sangha, or this year, or this century. For 2600 years students have been getting lost in thoughts and feelings, forgetting to notice this moment, this breath. Forgetting to notice the only thing that is going on – reality.

In the *Satipatthana Sutta: Foundations of Mindfulness* as translated from the Pali by Anzan roshi, the Buddha, Gautama Siddhartha, is said to have instructed his students (who were required to be monks), thus:

*“Breathing in, one is mindful, breathing out, one is mindful. Breathing out a long breath, one understands, ‘I breathe out a long breath.’ Breathing in a long breath, one understands, ‘I breathe in a long breath.’ Breathing out a short breath, one understands, ‘I breathe out a short breath.’ Breathing in a short breath, one understands, ‘I breathe in a short breath.’”*



This instruction is clear is it not? However, it can be misunderstood. (And as Roshi has said, *“If we can misunderstand our practice, we will. And if we misunderstand our practice, we practice our misunderstandings.”*)

It can seem as if this passage is instructing us to identify and judge the depth and the quality of the breath. Many of you have commented in practice interviews that you aren't breathing deeply enough or that your breath is shallow. And that's okay, but you have forgotten a number of things: First, those comments are thoughts. You notice the thought; we know that because you articulate it, in doing so you noticed something that is true about how you were in that moment. That moment of noticing IS the only moment that you can practice and you do so by feeling the breath at the tanden, feeling sensations in the body. Noticing seeing, and hearing, and tasting, and touching, and feeling, and smelling, and breathing, you are practicing in this moment.

Fortunately, endless opportunities are offered up for this noticing. Sometimes it can seem to be too much. Recently, a student, who was looking very worried, *“It seems like practice is too much work. I can't keep track of everything. I keep trying but...”* This student was asked to notice how experiencing was in THIS moment of breathing in and out. Upon doing so, the “trying” was exposed for what it was: a pattern. This was a pattern that came up over and over again for the student in other aspects of life. *“Oh my,”* the student sighed, *“no wonder I feel tired a lot. I am trying to do things I can't do and that I don't have to do. I'm putting far too much energy into “trying to notice” when all I need to do is notice.”*

The Sutta goes on to say that:

*“One practices, ‘I will breathe out with full experience of the whole body’, One practices, ‘I will breathe in with full experience of the whole body.’ One practices, ‘I will breathe out, calming the tendencies of the body.’ One practices, ‘I will breathe in, calming the tendencies of the body.’”*

What can seem to be a thought that one is being asked to say to oneself, “I will breathe out with full experience of the whole body,” is more a statement of intentionality. This instruction to practice cultivates, as you continue to practice, a knowing which is before thinking, and beyond, and without, words. You are noticing, simply noticing, that which is always already the case.

The Sutta continues:

*“Just as a skilful turner or a turner's apprentice, making a long turn, knows, ‘I am making a long turn’, or making a short turn knows, ‘I am making a short turn’, just so monks, the monk practices breathing out a long breath, knowing, ‘I breathe out a long breath.’”*

A turner, as described, is a potter or a woodworker. Whether we are a skilled potter or only an apprentice, whether we are a monk or a lay student, we have to know what's going on. We don't have to be an expert. We don't have to already know what we don't know in order to know this. We just have to be willing to learn, from what is actually going on, how to pay attention to what is going on. We have to be willing to know that we don't know and to be willing to make mistakes.

As we sit we can know the turning of the breath. Sky turns to breath. In-breath turns to out-breath and is this moment displaying itself as the out-breath. In *The Pivot*, Roshi said,

*“Each sound that is heard,  
Each sensation that rises and falls,  
Is the activity,  
The turning of this moment.”*

Speaking of “turns and turning”, I went skiing two days ago for the first time in two years. You may remem-

ber that beautiful day with the bright, clear blue sky. It was glorious.

I'm not a great skier. As with almost everything, it seems, I was a late starter and then I stopped in the mid-eighties. This was just about the time when I started practicing and studying with Roshi. I did not go skiing for over a decade. One day a student asked me if I would like to go skiing and it sounded like a good idea. On the way to the slopes I noticed some thoughts coming up which, if fed with my attention, could have turned into feelings I might in the past have called "fear" or "anxiety" or "worry." I practiced the moment of noticing and guess what? That first run was the best time I had ever had skiing. What I had learned on the zafu was presenting itself skiing on the mountain.

After a few years I stopped going and before I knew it I hadn't been for two years. Upon waking from sleep four days ago I knew I was going to ski that day. I did and guess what? It was the best skiing I have ever experienced. Effortlessly the interaction of mountain, snow, skis, and body, breath, and mind, presented a curving down the slope that was this moment. A little while later I started thinking about it, trying to come up with a strategy to recreate that effortless arcing through the pristine powder snow and, of course, I fell. Actually, I slid halfway down the mountain on my back with a cloud of sparkling crystals around me fracturing the sunlight and manifesting rainbows of light. Self-image had started to try. It's everywhere. Getting in the way, causing problems. What to do?

Practice.

When knowing becomes a thought about knowing, obstruction is presenting itself and it is ready to be released.

And the Sutta continues:

*“And further, monks, in going forward, and in going back, complete knowing is realized. In looking ahead and looking behind, complete knowing is realized. Bending and stretching, complete knowing is realized. Carrying the robes and bowl, complete knowing is realized. In eating and drinking, chewing and tasting, complete knowing is realized. Excreting and urinating, complete knowing is realized. In motion and in stillness, in sitting, in sleeping and waking, in speech and silence, complete knowing is realized.”*

Complete knowing is this moment. Knowing this moment completely is your life. Really. You may as well notice it.

Roshi said in the *Saturday Morning Dharma Talk I* quoted from at the beginning:

*“Each moment of breathing in is this moment. Each sound that is heard, each sensation that rises and falls is the activity, the turning of this moment. You and your world are arising here.”*

As we breathe in this sky in this moment together, whether we recognize it or not we are all present in this moment: Here, there, everywhere. I realize I haven't even talked about alignment of breath, about great bows, about the moment of bowing together in Dokusan or a practice interview. Hmmmm, well..

*Sit in the sky being breathed as this moment.  
Move through the air being breathed as this moment.  
See, hear, taste, touch, think, feel,  
breathe, as this moment.*

When the gong strikes, signaling the end of the sitting round, you have another vivid opportunity to notice with the whole bodymind as the out-breath returns to the sky, a pause, a sound, a feeling, the taste of breathing in this moment as this breath... turning...turning, noticing....

Effortless.

This easy and joyful practice.

Thank you for listening.

*FEBRUARY 5TH, 2000*

### **Part 3**

By the age of forty you will have breathed some two-hundred and fifty-two million, two-hundred and eighty-eight thousand times. This is a minimum calculation based on 12 breaths a minute. The calculation does not include Leap Year or any times you've increased your respiratory rate through climbing up stairs or mountains, running a marathon or exercising your dog. It doesn't take into account laughter, or sex, or lifting a child, walking, carrying groceries, getting out of bed or giving birth.

How many have you noticed?

Before we begin to practice we have usually only noticed our breath when we can't 'catch it' or when it's too short or too long, or laboured or impeded in some way. In short, as with so much of our life before we began to practice, we only notice it when there is a problem or when we are 'working with it' as a relaxation technique, or in learning to swim, sing, or play a wind instrument or in response to illness or injury. Otherwise we're just not aware of our own breath.

When we first encounter the Teachings of Dogen's Lineage of Zen and read *The Four Gates of Zen Practice* by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi, we discover at some point that "Four Gates" refers to body, breath, speech, and mind.

We are asked to practice mindfulness of breath and to use the breath as a touchstone to reveal ourselves to this moment. Sometimes we understand this and sometimes we don't. Sometimes we practice it and sometimes we don't. And sometimes we pay more attention to someone else's breath than we do our own: We find ourselves becoming irritated at the sound of the person sitting next to us breathing in and out, and in and out, and in and out.

If we mention the arising of irritation to a practice advisor, we are asked what we do at that moment and we might say that we "try to FOCUS ON the breath". The practice advisor will look at us astonished and goggle-eyed, "Wherever did you get the idea that you were to focus on the breath? No one here ever told you to FOCUS on the breath." We start to flush, and squirm and get angry. Self-image likes to be right and starts to look for excuses and justifications. But before we can speak we are told to "feel the breath at the tanden" or to feel "the body moving in and out with the breath" and we'd just like to poke the monk or to scream. We choke out that we are "TRYING TO FEEL THE BREATH BUT IT'S TOO SHALLOW" or that we don't know how to breathe or that there are too many things to notice. Or we just don't understand and what is the big deal about the breath anyway?

As has been said over and over (and as will continue to be said over and over) the breath being breathed as and through you is this moment of your life. It is this present moment. You may as well notice it because this is where and when your life actually is. Simply by noticing, by being mindful of the breath, the bodymind is being given a chance to balance itself out. The bodymind can and does find its balance. Over time we start to notice that our sense of being overwhelmed and pushed this way and that by thoughts and feelings is less frequent.

In *The Bodymind of the Way: Zen Teachings on Dogen Zenji's Shinjin Gakudo*, Zen Master Anzan Hoshin says:

*“We welcome you with open arms, and I do hope that you practice with wide open eyes and open breath. Open again and again into this moment. Enter again and again into this life.”*

As our practice opens, words become increasingly slippery and shoot out of our grasp. What we thought we understood of the meaning has changed. We thought that “open” meant wide and deep and big. In this context it means “as it is”. It means not manipulated or changed. It means this moment of breathing in as it is, and this moment of breathing out as it is. Should you notice commentary or judgment as to the quality or length or shallowness of the breath, simply notice that commentary as a thought and feel the breath simply as it is.

Roshi goes on to say,

*“An open breath might not necessarily be a deep breath. It might be a shallow breath, it might be a strangled breath. It might be a breath riding the crest of a wave of anxiety. An open breath is a breath that is attended to fully and completely, a breath that is breathed completely.”*

Attending to the breath does not mean to move attention toward the breath and away from other moments of experiencing. That movement of attention would be focusing on the breath and as I said before, no one told us to focus on the breath. There's room for everything in this moment so include the breath in this moment of attending to this moment.

Roshi continues:

*“The more fully that we breathe our breath, perhaps the longer and deeper they become. Perhaps. However whether it is a long breath or a short breath, it is this breath.”*

This sounds pretty simple. And it feels pretty simple when you're actually doing it. But we understand for a moment and then it slips away. We need all of the help we can get in this matter of mindfulness of breath. The forms of practice in the Monastery offer this help and direction...relentlessly...

As we enter the Hatto we bow. If we are attending completely to the moments of the bow we can feel the lungs expand with the in-breath as we lift the arms to place the hands palm to palm. As we bend at the hips we can feel the breath being exhaled from the body. As we straighten and bring the hands back to shashu we open attention to the flow of air through the nostrils, across the slightly parted lips, and as the air flows into the lungs the torso expands. This moment is the hands, the feet, the bones, the muscles, the seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, feeling, and the smell of incense as we step over the threshold into the Hatto.

During the formal bows as the incense is lit we are given another opportunity to align with Roshi or the monk who is leading the sitting. In this moment we are also aligning with the Lineage even if we don't yet know what this means exactly. In chanting practice we are asked to align body, breath, speech, and mind with the chanting leader. Alignment means many things as our practice deepens. It begins with just doing the forms together, at the same time, as often as we can. When we notice we are off the next breath gives us an opportunity to align and begin again. This opening of attention relentlessly hones and sharpens our senses, but without force. We start to be able to attend more fully to this moment.

Practice interviews, and, for formal students and monks, dokusan, are another opportunity to practice this alignment. We start to see that alignment isn't a one sided affair. At the moment of meeting Roshi or the practice advisor pay attention as we come to gassho together, aligned in body and breath. The student waits for the senior to lead. Look carefully and you will see that the senior is aligning



with you as well. In this one moment two people are breathing this moment together and recognizing and acknowledging this moment as this moment, without, before, and beyond, words. This simplicity highlights anything extra that comes up and gets in our way. Look carefully and you will see how contraction occurs, how it shrinks and knots the space of experiencing and how, if you fall for and propagate whatever story is going on, a self comes into being. This self is frozen, like a deer caught in the headlights of an on-coming car. Quick, notice it, open the tendency to contract around that one moment of experiencing, see the seeing, hear the hearing, feel the breath, and take your place on the zafu. There is no problem. You are, however, beginning to see the functioning of the formation of states. In that seeing you are being offered the key to freedom from them.

Take it. Use it. The Lineage of Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors invites us all to receive our lives as they truly live.

Anzan Hoshin roshi continues in *The Bodymind of the Way*:

*“To try to manipulate and structure or restructure the breath; to try and structure or restructure the mind, to shift around the contents of consciousness trying to find a more pleasing pattern; to manipulate our lives by amputating those parts that don't seem to fit...All of this is confusion about who we are and what the world is, what the body is, what the mind is. If you confuse yourself like this, then the mind will become bits and pieces of a broken mind.”*

Open to this breath, open to this moment, practice with wide-open eyes.

Open this body, this mind, to the open air. And practice things as they are.

This practice of things as they are requires no struggle. It cannot be constructed or manufactured. This recognition

of this moment of body, breath, speech, and mind, is practicing yourself as you are. Through this continuous practice, this gyoji, Dogen zenji says, *“Thus you will be able to steal the nostrils of the Buddhas and Ancestors and make them breathe out.”*

Thank you for listening.

**APRIL 8, 2000**

## **Part 4**

In *Shinjin Gakudo: Studying the Way Through the Bodymind*, Dogen zenji said, *“Thus you will be able to steal the nostrils of the Buddhas and Ancestors and make them breath out.”*

When we hear this or read it for the first time... or maybe the second or the third time...there is a moment when we know what our Lineage Ancestor Dogen zenji meant. “Ah...ahha yes. He's saying that if we practice thoroughly and wake up, we are the manifestation of the Lineage, of the Ancestors right here, right now. We are the Lineage.”

But we become confused as we think about our understanding. We worry it like a domestic dog will worry a bone. ‘Worrying’; shaking, biting, and sucking on the bone coats it with slippery ropes of saliva, dirties it, and eventually turns it into a shattered thing abandoned...to decay. The activity of ‘worrying’ the bone exhausts the dog. And for what? The bone is not food. The bone is an object around which the activity of this game of ‘worrying’ occurs. The bone has become an object of distraction for the dog and a means of burning off energy.

Our thoughts can be used as objects of distraction. They can have the appearance of practice, a true expression of

'the real thing'. When asked how our practice is, we can adopt a particular 'wise' tone of voice and say, "I am starting to really see and understand how each thing affects everything else." Nodding knowingly (not quite but almost doing a Pythonesque 'nudge, nudge, wink, wink' to the practice advisor), "It is really true."

We expect our sagacity to be rewarded. We want the practice advisor to declare, in awe, "Yes, yes... well done... that's it... you've done it... you understand" and we can join the ranks of THOSE WHO KNOW.

The practice advisor, instead of gasping in amazement and running off to get Roshi, says, "How is your practice right now? What are you noticing?"

Left hanging, breathless, in mid-air, self-image starts to generate stuff: "Wait a minute... Wasn't the answer true? Sure it's true. I heard Roshi say something like that or I read it or something... I recognized something, didn't I? Sputter, splutter, splurt, splat..." Sooner or later with more or less guidance we do notice what is really going on...

Everything, of course, depends on how you are when you are uttering the words. Practice is recognizing how you are and practicing that moment of recognition. The words are just words. They are neither true nor false. If you were feeling the tongue against the teeth, the sounds reverberating in your abdomen, neck, and chest, if you were noticing seeing and hearing and tasting and touching and feeling and the breath moving across the vocal chords carrying sounds across the tongue to be shaped into words, what you said may have been relevant to that moment.

If you were not noticing seeing and hearing you were "worrying a bone", pretending to yourself to understand, instead of understanding this moment as the only moment to practice. You are being breathed in and out, thoughts are swirling, a "sense of self" is viewing this maelstrom. Practice the moment you notice this sense of a self which is "experiencing practice".

That sense of self is how you are at that moment. You have noticed a 'self' coming into being. Practice that moment of noticing. Practice like this until all moments of knowing are simply knowing in itself. All of the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors provide and have provided, and will continue to provide us with instruction on how to practice this.

Zen Master Anzan Hoshin points out in *The Bodymind of the Way*, his comments on *Shinjin Gakudo*, that,

*"The real meaning of practice cannot be grasped because the moment that one tries to grab onto one's practice and tries to 'understand it', the moment that one tries to limit one's practice by taking a look 'at' it, in that moment you have distanced yourself from it. You are then no longer practicing but are only pretending to practice. One is only thinking about practicing."*

We don't know if the dog was actually "thinking" about hunting when worrying the bone. But we can know when we are "thinking", or more accurately propagating a lot of thoughts about practice, instead of practicing. The more we choose to allow attention to move into, and to entertain ourselves with, descriptions, conjectures, thoughts, about what we have understood, the less likely we are to be actually practicing in that moment. But we do have the capacity to practice fully and completely in that moment of noticing. Again, that moment of noticing is the only moment we can practice.

Ancestors such as Zen Master Dazhi of Baizhang cautioned that, *"If you just grasp onto the view that primordial purity and inherent freedom will liberate you or that Zen practice will enlighten you, you fall into holding the blind view of spontaneous enlightenment."*

What is required is the willingness to see how the energies of the bodymind tend to be attracted to, and congeal around, views, concepts, slogans, ideas, descriptions, conjectures, thoughts about the bodymind and thoughts about

practice. At the moment of seeing clearly what is really going on we are instructed to recognize thought as thought, to feel the breath and watch what happens as the bodymind releases its pattern of attachment to that view, concept, slogan, idea, description, conjecture...our thoughts about practice. We are instructed to recognize and realize the exertion of the whole bodymind in this moment.

Roshi comments that, *“The teachings are not just a pile of junk lying in an old house, they are the collected effort and energy of those who study the Way”*.

Chinese Tiandai Master Zhiyi, who died in 598 C.E., wrote a book about studying the way. In Chinese, the title is the *Mo Ho Shi Guan*, in Japanese *Maka Shi Kan*. This has been translated by Roshi as *The Big Book of Stopping and Looking*. In *The Big Book of Stopping and Looking*, this Awakened Ancestor described samatha and vipasyana, shi and ka'n, concentration and insight, as like the two wings of a bird in flight. They were to be practiced together, each informing the other. We need at least a little samatha or will-power or concentration to keep us on the zafu so we have an opportunity to notice when we become concentrated or obsessed about any particular thought, and are using it to distract ourselves from everything else that is going on.

Vipasyana, insight or clear seeing, is recognizing that moment of waking up from the distraction of thoughts, descriptions, obsessions. Seeing it for what it is; a moment of waking up from a dream. Waking up to reality we are instructed to feel the breath at that moment of waking up, arising as this moment. Why feel the breath? If you're breathing you are alive in this moment. May as well notice it.

As Master Zhiyi said some 1300 years ago, the bird needs to have both wings in balance so that it can fly properly. It needs to be breathing in and to be supported by the vastness of the sky.

The essence of our practice, “*shojo no shu*”, – realized practice – is to align ourselves with what is true about exper-

riences and experiencing. This is the practice of Aware Space. As taught by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin Hakukaze this is the practice of the vastness in which everything moves. A little shamatha, a little vipasyana, moving in the vastness of the sky.

Our practice is not the wings of the bird, not the bird; it is the practice of the vastness within which everything moves.

We are freely offered endless opportunities for alignment of body, breath, speech, and mind as we move, bow, chant, sit, have our posture re-adjusted, do kata, meet Roshi, or a Dharma Teacher, or a senior in a hallway. All you really need to do moment after moment is stop and look. Then follow the instruction which presents itself.

During Great Bows, when aligned with the sitting leader we can notice that the exhalation of the breath supports and guides the bodymind as joints bend and we move toward the floor. The inhalation of the breath as we rise pulls us up. The more our attention can be open the easier it is to move that 100 plus pounds of meat, sinew, bone, and marrow through some 5 to 6 feet of space. Practice it.

The Teachings are what the lineage ancestors have experienced and have expressed about studying the bodymind of the Way with their bodyminds. Their bodyminds were dedicated, through vows taken, to uncovering the Way, and through that to help you uncover who you are before all your thoughts about who you are.

This Lineage of the Way has been expressed for 2600 years. The Lineage continues to express through body, breath, speech and mind, what it is to be a real human being. And the Lineage tells you how to do it.

The Buddhas and Lineage Ancestors were people, human beings just like you and me. The Teachings are what the Lineage Ancestors understood and subsequently expressed from their own experiencing as uncovered through their own practice. The Teachings are about their experi-

encing. The Teachings are a record of how those experiencings and understandings were transmitted to students.

The Teachings are about you in this moment. We cannot know this moment by memorizing and spouting back some little slogan about “each thing making everything else what it is” and expect to be convincing. We can see how self-image is used to being a mimic, how it tries to construct and present a self that “understands” rather than being the expression of understanding itself.

The recognition of this moment of body, breath, speech, and mind, is practicing yourself as you are. Through this continuous practice, this *gyoji*, you become, and recognize that you are, the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors.

When you truly are the full expression of that understanding in every moment, “You steal the nostrils of the Buddhas and Ancestors and make them breath out.”

Thank you for listening.

**APRIL 22, 2000**



Daoist Temple, Beijing  
Shikai Zuiko 1991



# Vain and Vanished

## Dharma Talk and Mondo

### Dharma Talk:

So, obviously you all made it through the night. Obviously you woke up this morning. Obviously you saw all of those little thoughts that came up about why it was impossible for you to come this morning. Or you saw all of those little thoughts saying what a great day it was going to be, and you may have believed them, in which case, if you did that, you have an expectation. Any time you have an expectation you could stand the risk of being sorely disappointed.

[Laughter]

Practice, as we know, is practicing beyond hope and fear and expectation. Practice is practicing this moment, which is your life. Your life will end. I hope that doesn't happen during the course of the Dharma Assembly, but I do hope on the other hand, that you notice birth and death moment-to-moment during this Dharma Assembly. You can notice a thought that comes up. It wants to be born, as it were. Attention feeds into it and before you know it there's a "self" sitting there who is either having a miserable time or a great time. It doesn't really matter. The sense of a self that has formed, this knot in space, has been born into a self that has certain characteristics which, in fact, you are making up. That is what we human beings seem to do. We find this moment of experience, this moment of our life, so devoid of interest that we go to great lengths to fabricate stories about who we are and what's going on. And it takes us as long as it takes to start to recognize that that is what we are doing. That's why we practice.

Now, we have the sense of sudden enlightenment,

which is recognizing that maybe we should do something with our life; perhaps we could look into it, perhaps we could practice it. And then comes the gradual practice which is a wonderful opportunity to, moment to moment, look into the movement of attention, to look into how you are so that who you are can be uncovered before you die.

So you have birth and death in each moment, the birth and death of dharmas, moments of experience. You can notice them. The instruction is: At the moment of noticing anything whatsoever about how you are, no matter how trivial self-image may think it is, you notice it, feel the breath, sit up straight, open the peripheral vision. What you are doing by doing nothing is allowing those knots to unravel, the knots being the patterns that have been accumulated which we use to define ourselves.

Yesterday I was at the swimming pool. I went to the pool because about a week ago I decided I was going to really practice swimming. I thought that would be fun. And I have on my little agenda that what I would like to do is learn how to dive so it makes sense to be a good swimmer before you dive, apparently.

[Laughter]

So I had sort of dabbled around with this swimming business over the years, sort of...get the nice suit on and the nice hair and go out like this [Osho makes sounds reminiscent of someone ineffectively paddling in water] across the pool, not wanting to get anything wet, get out, sit in the sun. So this time I thought, well, that looks like a good thing to do. It just felt right that I wanted to do this swimming business.

So I'm in the pool and I'm starting out and I am splashing and thrashing and thinking, "This is so difficult. This is *really* difficult." So I do one length. I have to stop about four times going down that length to catch a breath and in the

course of doing that my mouth fills up with water and so on and so on. I was thinking, “This is impossible. I will never be able to do this.” So the next day I went again and I did four laps, still splashing and thrashing. Then it occurred to me that what I was doing with the thrashing around was replicating a situation when I used to swim when I was growing up.

I swam in a river that was quite narrow, that had rapids at one end and a waterfall at the other. And what happened was that in order to get to the other side and to avoid being swept over the waterfall, I had to just paddle like crazy. There was no room for any sort of style. It was survival. So I realized I was doing the same thing in this pool. I was bringing all of the energy of survival into this situation and actually defeating my purpose totally.

So once I got that sorted out I then ventured into the flippers that you put on your feet, which actually... work... I was so surprised. It became more and more smooth; I was going further and further. And I got the little yellow paddles, the plastic paddles for the hands and in taking a stroke going even further. Before I knew it, I thought I was an otter and I got all the way down the length of the pool in two breaths. So yesterday I did 20 laps. It was fabulous. I just had the best time!

So then I thought about birth and death. I thought about death, I thought about “vain and vanishing”. How many of our patterns do we allow to play themselves out? Here we are experiencing. We're sitting in the midst of the sky; we're breathing it in and out or it is being breathed in and out through us, through the bodymind; and we are thrashing around, kind of flailing against all our stories about what's going on. So, practice, sitting down on the zafu and looking at these things, these stories that come up that cause us to contract and thrash, and learning how to open them, can open to what has been described as “great ease”, the great ease of your life. So by practicing, moment to moment while

we are sitting on the zafu, we are, in a way, preparing ourselves for THE great ease, kind of when we just slide out; when the bodymind ceases to breathe. This is inevitable.

Yesterday I also picked up a Yoga journal and in it there was an article entitled *The Art of Dying*. So I thought I would pick that up. And by the way, if anyone thinks we are calling this the “Zen of Dying”, let me say we are not. So *The Art of Dying* – and that caused me to think for a moment about how self-image really, really does like to think that it has a handle on everything. So we are preparing, we get busy preparing for this death, this physical death as if it is going to happen sometime in the future, a long time from now, way, way in the future. So we have lots of time to prepare for it. Well, none of us sitting here know if we are going to have another breath. So at this point we might be able to understand the urgency with which people – the Teachers of the Lineage – have spoken about the effort to put forward in one's practice: practice as if your hair were on fire.

We chanted the *Fukanzazengi: How Everyone Can Sit* and you may have noticed the words “*vain for a moment and vanished in an instant*”. “**Vain and Vanished**” is the title that I chose for this Dharma Assembly, for this mondo. So “vanished” we understand, but “vain”, well, hold on a minute because the first thing that does pop into mind is looking in a mirror, saying, “I am so cool”. And we see in the poster that Roshi made up, that wonderful graphic where it's a skull for a moment, whatever attracts your eye first, and then there's a very attractive woman looking in a mirror, looking at herself in a mirror, which is just great – “**Vain and Vanished.**” But why settle there? So I went through my gigantic dictionary and looked into what “vain” actually means because I realized that it couldn't be just that. There was certainly more to it. And would opening the door of meaning shift understanding? Which, of course, it does.

So “vain” means worthless, futile; comes from the Latin “vanus”, empty of substance, vainness, empty, void, idle.

And in the 1300's the word was used to mean “devoid of real value, worth, or significance, worthless, of no effect, force or power”; then, “trivial and unimportant”. So if we used that to look into “vain and vanished”, “vain” then is a very good description of all of the manifestations of self-image. Basically worthless. The thoughts coming up about how we can or cannot do something; how we are having a good time or a bad time. We latch onto them. We feed attention into them. We construct a personality. We construct an attitude. We construct a point of view. When we do that we limit the possibility of open experiencing. That's what we are practicing moment to moment; seeing how we do that, feeling the breath, sitting up straight, allowing it to open. Opening to openness.

Now, think about thrashing around in the pool again, or think about some point in time when you have been thrashing around with a problem. If you were to drop dead in that moment, would that have been how you would have liked to go if you had a choice? Or would you rather smoothly watch the bodymind closing down, watch the energies of bodymind as they fall into the heart area and actually know and experience what's going on? Well, I know what I opted for a long time ago. So here we are.

## **Mondo:**

Does anyone have any particular aspect of death or dying or this moment that they would like to talk about right now, or ask a question about? And bear in mind that this is a relatively new process for us, this mondo. It's a traditional form of Teaching, it's like a practice interview for a group. We haven't done it before, so self-image will come up and it will say...

[Laughter]

...Or not say, as the case may be, but it will say and impose limitations. "I can't"...well, none of us can, so let's just relax. Is there anything you would like to know?

[Student]: I would like to know, if somebody in the Sangha dies, what is the procedure at the Centre? What would you do? Would you say certain chants?

[Osho]: We do have a chant that we do which can be requested. The *Komyo Shingon* is what it's called. People who are here at Dainen-ji will often see up on the board a notice saying that so-and-so has died and that Roshi and the monastics are doing this particular chant for them. Also, if a person who was close to a practitioner dies, the *Komyo Shingon* can be requested for them. And that's it.

[Student]: I told my husband to email the Zen Centre if I died and let them know right away.

[Osho]: Right. And the *Komyo Shingon* goes on, I think, for 49 days or 46?

[Chunen tando]: 49 days.

[Osho]: 49 days, yes. That is the recognition that this transforming that's going on all the time, and that has been going on since the first star burst, the first star exploded, is occurring again. And that for a practitioner there is a recognition that what has come from luminosity, the basic nature of reality, is dispersing into that again.

[Student]: Osho, if there is nothing beyond this life, when you die you are gone, what difference does it make whether you see your going or you don't?

[Laughter]

[Osho]: Okay, that's a good question. Each thing affects everything else. That's one fact. The process of our life is our life. It is not our stories about our life. When we get caught up on any sort of story about our life, as a species there is a contraction that occurs. We've all experienced that. "Oh, I hate this, I hate this, I hate it so much" and what has happened with that – bang – there is a focusing and what is born is this being that is hating something and the natural and inevitable and unfortunately proven over and over again, end result of that, can be mass destruction, violence of some form or another, something that is basically not useful.

So the story that this little "me" is going to come back again is simply not true either. So we can take reincarnation, "back in the meat again", as simply another story, the way we usually think about it. So we talk about – what is talked about now is – "easeful" death as well. We may as well, in my view, do anything as gracefully as we possibly can and have as much enjoyment with it as we possibly can. That causes greater gentleness and ease in the long run.

There are many aspects to any of these questions that we are dealing with right now. Recognize that since humans first started to talk they've come up with all kinds of schemes and very creative stories to try to explain what's going on, to try to make the randomness and chaotic nature of reality somehow containable. Experience can only be experienced. It's not any of our words about it.

So if we want to be useful, I think this is one of the things that brings everyone here to practice, is that we want to be more useful to maybe ourself – we think "I'm not having as good a time as is possible" – all of our reasons for coming to practice are actually suspect...

[Laughter]

But underneath it there is, I do believe, there is a drive to find out what's really going on so that things can be kind of fixed, in the world in general. Why are these things going on? We may get this, we start to look at this, maybe at a very

early age, like, “what's going on?” And eventually we find ourselves in a room full of beings talking about what's going on, really, and how can we open more fully to our life while we still can, which is at this point, while we are alive.

We'll have an opportunity to discuss things further, so what you can also do is, if during the course of the day, during a free period, there's something that you would like to have raised, we can do that. If during a practice interview there's something you would like to have addressed we can do that.

Anyone else have anything they would like to ask?

[Student]: Yes, I do. The thrashing about that you described is, for better or worse, what makes it possible for us to get through a day.

[Osho]: Oh really?

[Student]: Well, going out there and getting caught in a traffic jam – is (inaudible), “I'm not going to get here on time.”

[Osho]: So you thrashed. Did you get here faster?

[Student]: I don't know.

[Laughter]: “I” couldn't get here at all.

[Osho]: But you caused yourself a lot of unnecessary depletion of resources, of the energy of bodymind, because that's what we do. It's not the thrashing about that gets us here, it's looking at reality and saying, “Well, really, there's so much traffic that me sitting in my little vehicle thrashing about is not going to hurt anybody; but it's not going to change anything, except that I'm going to get really tired and I might just ram that guy.”

[Laughter]



Intention and thrashing about are sort of different things. Identifying what we want to do is great, it helps us because we don't want to just sit here in this kind of current of "going with the flow, like..." that doesn't work. The 60's proved it – "peace and love" and "going with the flow" and "being here in the moment" didn't really stop anything from happening like the World Trade Centre or the genocides that are occurring in various countries right now, so I think we can put that aside.

But looking at reality, looking at what's really going on in this moment, in your own experience, and then knowing what to do, which is: Feel the breath, sit up straight, open the peripheral vision. Over time, that is embodied. So no matter what you're doing, whether it's being really sick or whether it's being terribly frustrated by doing that, you can ease the way for yourself and for others.

[Student]: Self-image tends to manipulate, to give negativity, causes us to thrash, take over the body, maybe make it sick by making it so negative, frustrated and upset. Why would self-image seek to destroy its "livelihood"?

[Osho]: Well, self-image is not a "thing" as such. We use that phrase to describe a tendency that human beings have. A thought comes up and we, as the knowing, know the thought. But we don't know **that** before we actually start to practice because we think we are the thoughts. Thoughts'R us. That's just how it is. So we feed attention, or attention is fed into that, whatever that thought might be, whatever the subject that self-image has chosen, and we use it to define ourselves. When we start to practice we start to see that we have choice and that we are practicing that moment of choice. So there is a clear seeing, we go "Oh, yeah. This is not really going on. This thought and the content that is telling me to do something cannot do it, unless I let it." So knowing makes a choice to either follow or not follow. But the only way we can know that is by practicing that.

But it certainly is a good question. We, human beings as a species, are destroying the host. No parasite in its right mind destroys the host. The idea is that we keep the host alive as long as possible so that the parasites could propagate. But I am not sure, I am not familiar with all forms of parasite, but I think that we are one of the few that is doing everything we possibly can to kill the host, the planet (That's self-image in all of its manifestations. When we get into nation states, when we get into "mine" and "thine", these kinds of separations and fighting and squabbling and thrashing about, which benefit no one, are the same movement from the broader to the narrower).

So, just sitting there you are making a choice not to follow whatever view self-image comes up with.

[Student]: Osho, I regularly confuse the "I" that is making the choice – you used the language "knowing, knowing makes a choice?" – and I can take that "I" as self and potentially self-image, I guess, when I use that language it means the same thing to me. Can you help me understand that a little better?

[Osho]: First of all, what we are talking about is experiencing and no way of talking about it can be that experiencing so "I", "you", these are just words that we use for convenience of communication. They're kind of a code. They don't define anything although we have made it so that we will say, "This is a striker" [Osho picks up gong striker], and that would be the end of it. But really, first of all it could be called all sorts of other things, names in different languages, and it is a description of activity rather than an object. So in this sense, there is no such thing as objects; there's just activities that are occurring; same thing with "I" and "self"; same way with "knowing". This happens to be a larger, a vaster, a more encompassing description of what's going on rather than there being an "I" in here, which is how we tend to think about it.

So we talk about “knowing”. And any time anything like that comes up, feel the breath, sit up straight if you are sitting on your cushion, and let it open. And then we see the pattern. There will be a thrashing about. Practice at the moment of noticing the thrashing about and other things will make themselves apparent.

Anyone else?

[Student]: I have a question further to what you said about reincarnation, in terms of that. I've always had a little difficulty understanding what was being talked about in reincarnation, if there isn't a self.

[Osho]: Me too.

[Laughter]

[Student]: Hinduism makes a bit of sense, but when there isn't a self, what is that talking of?

[Osho]: Well, with Zen practice what we are talking about is the actual nature of experiencing. Quite simply, that's it. So even anything I say, we'll get into stories about. Anything anyone says, we'll get into stories about. But I think about things like this:

DNA analysis wasn't around in the time of Dogen or in the time of Gautama Siddhartha, so the idea that you could, in fact, identify someone who'd been in a particular place after they'd long gone would be quite unusual and probably someone would say, “You must be mad to come up with such an idea”, but now it's been proven that that can be done. Not only that, that can be done to the point of identifying DNA from Cheshire Man, who was, I don't know how many thousands of years ago walking around, and his mitochondrial DNA has actually been followed to people who live in that particular area of England, so we could say direct descend-

ants of someone who lived thousands of years ago. Is it not possible that just as we can smell a molecule of perfume that was left a long time ago in a room, is it not possible that other information is in fact conveyed, information that may have been encoded in a molecule that someone of long ago discarded or had discarded when they were in this room? So what it means to me is that there is this process, quite simply, there is this process of constant recycling that goes on with all of nature. And anything else, including what I say, is a story or a way of looking at it or of trying to have some fun with what's going on. But we human beings do love stories and we will believe them and we will make cosmologies out of them as quickly as we possibly can because that gives us the illusion that there is something that is controllable and understandable.

Does that help at least open up a little? All we can do is open doors. "*Dharma gates beyond measure I vow to penetrate.*" So when the thrashing comes up, and it can be about anything, and it can be looking at why does so-and-so say this, and why does so-and-so say that, and how come I don't understand? You have three thrashings there; so at that moment feel the breath, sit up straight, allow the thrashings to open up and recognize that there are some very interesting moments of experiencing available that can lead to more and more interesting moments of experiencing which will help us at least become more capable of communicating to various and sundry beings in the process of liberation of those beings.

[Student]: Yes, a story that I sometimes make up and I think it probably works with the philosophy of this group...

[Osho]: There's no philosophy. It's good to be clear – this group, the Zen students sitting in this room of which you are one, – you are Zen practitioners practicing the bodymind in this moment there's no philosophy involved in it. There's no

belief system involved in it. It is not a religion. Okay, so what is your story?

[Student]: All right. Something that I practice, I guess, is that if I'm experiencing something or doing something and it is something, perhaps, that I have done with someone else or reminds me of someone else, be it good or bad or whatever, and that in a certain sense is the equivalent of everlasting life, so to speak, for that person, you know, me sort of bringing that up.

[Osho]: I see what you mean. Sure, yes, memory, when we have memory, when we have patterns that are triggered off, in a sense, yes. And with great works of art, with great writing and so on, what makes it great, often, is that it is a universal, it touches the core of human experience so it can live forever. It's true. Yes, that's very good.

So, anything else or would we like some kinhin?

[Osho]: So, since 9:30 this morning, hundreds and thousands of beings have been liberated; mind moments have come and gone; contractions have been opened and everybody Woke Up, right?

[Laughter]

So is there anything that you would like to talk about? Well then, put on your nose plugs, we're entering into the Ocean of Reality, so face the wall.

***DAINEN-JI, JUNE 8, 2002***



Aiwan shu, Ningbo, China  
Shikai Zuiko 1991

## **Mind the Gap**

Mondo presented by Ven. Shikai Zuiko osho

[Gong strike]

*“The Dharma is vast and deep, perfectly penetrating,  
rare to encounter through numberless kalpas.  
Now we can see it and hear it, open and attain it.  
We vow to penetrate to the Tathagata's true Teachings.”*

[Gong strike]

If and when you travel to London, England and you decide you would like to go and sit at Harrow Zazenkai, which is really in South Harrow, you would be, let's say, in downtown London and you'd be going to take the Underground because it is really very efficient and an inexpensive way to travel. Then you'd have to find out how to get where you want to go and this can be kind of confusing for us the first few times. We look: We have stations and lines and the lines are Bakerloo, Central, Circle, District, East London, Hammersmith and City, Jubilee, Metropolitan, Waterloo and City, Victoria, Piccadilly and Northern. And if you are like most travelers – I'm speaking from experience – in the beginning of setting out to travel you look at the map in the Underground and go, “Oh no”, and all of a sudden we tend to lose, often, capacity for following lines and following directions and so on. And it can be quite confusing because there are lots of people rushing around and they all look like they know where they're going and self-image, being the way it is, will say to itself, “Well, look at them. They all know where they're going and they're probably noticing me looking as if I don't know where I'm going”, because that's how self-image is. It believes itself to be the centre of the universe.

So once we get it straightened out that, yes, the best way to get there would be to take the Piccadilly Line, we

notice that there's all sorts of stations that we may be going by. We start at Piccadilly Circus, then we have Hyde Park Corner, Knightsbridge, Gloucester Road, Earl's Court, Baron's Court, Hammersmith, Green Park, and a couple more in between, Acton Town. We have to be careful at Acton Town because if we are on the wrong train we could end up at Heathrow. So we don't know. We've never done this before, so our hearing and our sight could get a little garbled because we are so worried about being lost we've forgotten that we always are where we are and that we actually, should we choose to exercise the capacity to open states, have enough time. So we go to the train that is going to take us to Sudbury Town, Sudbury Hill, and South Harrow and then we get off.

I've taken that route lots of times and I notice that, interestingly, people who are totally familiar with what they are doing and with their route, will hurry down the escalators. They are running. Then they will get on the train and immediately start to do something, anything, to distract themselves from the tedious journey. So we have headsets and phones and sandwiches and books and so on.

Now this is a universal. This type of behavior is a universal. It's not limited to the London Underground. In fact, we do this with our lives: birth, death, and in between, maintenance.

[Laughter]

Or birth, death, and, depending upon what time in history we are born, to what group of people, to what our family circumstances are, we may have, in between, culturally appropriate and significant landmarks. So we will have birth and then we might have, depending upon certain fixtures, we might have things like circumcision, baptism, school, dating, wedding, children.



Tedium  
Tedium  
Tedium  
Death

So it varies according to what the cultural signifiers are. Most of us will never question into any of the cultural signifiers, just as a person on that train will wake up when they hear Acton Town. The rest in between is the mmmm...

[Osho imitates the drone of a moving train]

“...mind the gap.” (imitating the voice of the announcer)  
Mmmmm...

[Osho imitates the drone of a moving train]

“...mind the gap.” But even that “mind the gap” gets eventually clouded over. To “mind the gap” is to notice, when you are on the train and you are going to get off the train, that at some stations there is a gap between the train door and the platform. Terrible things can and have happened to people who are not aware of the gap. You can get your foot stuck in it and that would be a disaster. But after a while, after we hear anything for a while, we human beings tend not to listen, tend not to look, and tend not to pay attention, because self-image says it knows what's going on, and nothing's going to happen to it anyway, so why should it have to pay attention to what hoi polloi pay attention to? Or it may not even be that sophisticated: We just shut down until we get to what we want, to our destination.

Now, in this practice, the gap is quite a different thing, or the gap that I am talking about today, is a different thing. And it is always a good idea to clarify what you're talking about, what you are hearing, and what it means. So in some teisho that Roshi has given he's talked about a “gap in prac-

tice” and of course that means the practice is not continuous. Any word can only mean what it is heard to mean. If it is understood because of context of past experience in a certain way, that's what it is going to mean to the person who hears it. I may say any word, you may use any word, in a certain way and be quite sure that everyone is going to understand what you mean but that is not the case. Our experience defines the meaning of the word.

So a gap...I looked in the big dictionary that I have downstairs and of course it is a very important text because it has teeny-tiny type and you have to get a big magnifying glass to read it and we all know that that makes it very, very important. So the “gap”: It's an old word in English and they have a date record, 1380. So we know right there that we are not talking about the store because it was not around in 1380.

So, “*Any opening or breach in an otherwise continuous object.*” So, if the gong has a nick in it we could say that's a “gap”. But not everything is an object. But we will try and do that. We human beings want to make anything an object and that's one of the main tasks that self-image assigns itself. It makes an object of anything. It wants to make anything solid so that it can then have the sense that it's in control. It makes the body an object and gets very surprised when it looks one day at the skin around its arm and notices it's full of wrinkles because it hasn't recognized that there's process. The body is a process, just like practice is, but we want to make an object out of it.

So, “*Any opening or breach by which entry may be effected*” is also a definition of “gap”. That must be pretty old, too, because there are things like a gap in the ramparts around a castle. But when we look at it from the point of view of practice and the point of view of the presentation, the Dharma Assembly today, that's a good meaning: “An opening or a breach by which entry may be affected.”

So we talk about, in practice, “usual mind” and “ordi-

nary mind". A very simple distinction is that "usual" is what we do before we practice and basically what is going on most of the time for most of the humans that you'll meet. "Ordinary mind" is the mind that has practiced and is practicing and that means that it's actually looking, moment to moment, at experiencing and seeing what's going on, and recognizing that we do not have to live with the contractions of self-image. They are not inherent to the bodymind. We make a choice to feed our attention into a story about what's going on and that obstructs the natural intelligence of the bodymind.

Ordinary mind means a mind that is unobstructed, a bodymind that is unobstructed, a human being that actually knows where they are and what's going on and is living in this moment un-contracted. Another traditional term is "wholesome". "Wholesome" in that context means "full and present" as opposed to "unwholesome", which is contracted. It is not a judgment as such, it is a distinction.

"To make a gap or a breach in or between" is another definition of "gap"; a breach in or between. So we could say there is a breach in or between our usual rounds of thoughts and feelings, that continuous, or apparently continuous, stream of chit-chat, internal dialogue, ruminations, choices about how to fashion ourselves in a certain moment, how to present ourselves in a certain moment. And in the beginning of practice we do, when we sit down, actually start to notice that what we are taking to be continuous, the "blah, blah, blah, blah," the "blather, blather, blather," "Yahde-yahda" and something happens like...

[Osho strikes gong]  
...and we go, "OH!"

And we see for a moment that there's a room around us, that there's actually more going on in our experience than what we had selected to fixate on. The thoughts are

not continuous. They arise in space. So a gap is created in that usualness. That moment of “gap” is the only moment that you can practice; actually, actively, practice. That is because you've Woken Up for a moment. Head comes up, eyes open, there's an awareness, a knowing, of the rest of experiencing, which is the rest of what's going on with the bodymind. At that moment the instruction is to feel the breath, sit up straight, feel other bodily sensations. So what you are doing is practicing the larger space which is the reality of experiencing in that moment.

Do you have any questions about what has been said up to this point?

[Student]: You mentioned, Osho, that we make a conscious decision not to be Awake, and yet it feels as though it is completely unconscious; it's always there. The moment of being Awake is a conscious decision. The rest of it is the unconscious.

[Osho] Well, we actually do have choice. We've always had choice about falling into our stories. The choice, the capacity for choice, has always been there. Just because someone didn't tell us doesn't mean that we don't have the capacity. And yes, it can feel like we have no choice and the longer we have had patterns running that have defined, and that we have used to define, and that culture has used to define, us, it could be that the patterns are going to present themselves quite strongly and because we have believed them for so long, we can't believe that anything else is possible. And patterns are not, as we all know, I am sure, patterns are not just this little story, something that comes up, and we go, “Oh my goodness, a pattern.” No, this pattern or tendency affects the whole body because each thing in the bodymind affects everything else. And nobody knows how. Science doesn't know how, exactly, all of this occurs, but we do know

that when we learn something whole-bodily, whether we chose to learn it or just had it patterned into us, that whenever the little flag comes up pointing to that thing, there's a flood of biochemistry that occurs, some of which can be very strong.

So what we are dealing with is the phenomena of being a human being which is very complex and can only, actually, be experienced. I am glad you used the words “seems like”, because it does seem like, just as when we get lost in a thought, it can seem like we leave the room because the bodymind seems to disappear, because we are very involved in that particular story.

I can tell you it's not true. We do not leave the Zendo or the Hatto when we are caught up in our thoughts. Because if we did, I would say about two minutes into a sitting round there would be “pop, pop, pop, pop” as bodyminds magically disappeared and some of them might come back when the gong is run at the end of the period...

[Laughter]

...full room again. So yes, it “seems like” or “seems as if”, but we are learning and it can be very difficult because practice is about learning what actually occurs in the bodymind and we are learning it in a most unusual way, which is through the experience of sitting it down on a zafu, sitting it down for 30 minutes, which is something that we really don't like to do. We don't really – well, self-image, for sure, doesn't like to do anything, really. It will always find a million reasons why it can't or why it shouldn't or why something else would be better. And by the way, if you find yourself with some sort of discomfort, this is a more informal presentation and so you certainly may change your posture. You can sit like this with one leg up. That's a perfectly respectable posture. Be-

cause what's the point if you are so all-consumed, if you become consumed with discomfort...and then you won't be able to hear these little pearls that I...

[Laughter]

Does that answer your question? Does anyone else have a question they would like to ask?

[Student]: When a state is very big, let's say, I have the impression that you have resistance, that anyone else telling you that you should get out of it would increase it.

[Osho]: Oh yes.

[Student]: Lots of reactivity...

[Osho]: That's right. And again, that's a pattern that's learned. That reactivity is a pattern that's learned. The environment of practice is here only so that you can practice. And we come here and we bring all of our little patterns with us. Oh, yes, in the beginning we do try and leave them at the door. You know, we believe we leave the fact that we are nasty; mean-tempered; prone to swearing; might occasionally have a glass too much wine; might smoke a joint from time to time; might have cheated just the "tiniest bit" on our income tax; might have snapped at the dog, and so on... so we just leave all that stuff at the door and often we'll try and put on some sort of little face...

[Laughter]

[Osho]: But of course we've known that, we've known for 2600 years that that's what people do. So we come into the environment that's here for our practice but we don't understand when we are told that it's actually here for your practice

and your practice and your practice. We are not used to that. And we think that maybe it's "for the monks" and we are just allowed in to somehow be startled and upset and reviled.

[Laughter]

[Osho]: Then we start to get over that and we realize, yes, it really is for us to see things that arise in our experiencing and the reactivities that 'r us. Reactivities to just about anything. Someone will come along, when you're sitting, to adjust your posture. So, we get our posture adjusted and then all sorts of things can come up; "They touched me." "They shouldn't touch me." "I was straight." "She made me crooked." "Why don't they leave me alone?" "I am doing the best I can." "Oh yeah..right...only pay attention when I'm doing something wrong."

So all sorts of reactivities. Now, bear in mind I am speaking only of myself, and only in the early stages of my practice, right, because none of you have experienced anything like that.

[Laughter]

[Osho]: This is how human beings are. This is how self-image is. That's what we are working with. It's interesting that in practice interviews, for instance, very occasionally, once someone has really started to trust that what they are being taught is true, and that what is being said is true, and that you can say anything in a practice interview...that we start to tell the content... I think in the course of the past 13 or 14 years, only a couple of times has someone said to me, "I just wanted to punch you. Well, when you did this I got this [Osho imitates the sound of something like a wildcat growling]." Because we are still not convinced that we can even talk about something like that because "it means that we are a bad person".

We have forgotten that behavior (right?), behavior is what we have control over. So the wanting to act out, or

having a reactivity that causes us to want to say something nasty or to inflict damage on the practice advisor or the Dharma Teacher, is not who we are; it's a reactivity that's going on. So as with anything, when something's done there'll be a reactivity and there could often be a stronger push not to react. So there could be a bigger resistance, like "Who are you to tell me what to do?" [Osho laughs].

Is that the kind of thing that you are talking about?

[Student]: "Gassho."

[Osho]: So you feel the breath, you sit up straight. The thing you want to do, first of all, with any reactivity, is to get a better look at it and you get a better look at something by looking at it more closely in an unobstructed space. So space becomes obstructed by other reactivities, such as "You shouldn't have this"; "this shouldn't be happening"; "he means that..." and all the other stories that we have.

So you are looking for the gap in that stream of reactivities. And one day you notice it and the bodymind will actually practice in that moment. And it can occur in such a way that you may realize that self-image, who is always directing things, actually did not go through the steps of feeling the breath, feeling the hands and feet, sitting up straight; that that happened and you noticed it. The bodymind itself loves to practice because it is going from contracted to open. The movement is always from contracted to open. And when self-image stops picking on the bodymind, when we stop picking on it – "we" being the thing we think we are, the thing that lives up behind the eyes that has all of these different descriptions of itself – well, that's "self-image". When we practice with self-image and its numerous definitions of how we are, and how the world is, and what's going on, then those gaps in the habitual patterns and reactivities become wider and more and more frequent.

So the bodymind will present itself in spite of, perhaps,



us being “lost”, that sense of being carried away with something. This can be disconcerting, particularly if, say, we have a strong attachment to or have learned to hang on to a particular pattern, for whatever reason, for whatever adjective we may use to describe it. But we have deemed it useful because it has been around for a long time and we can generate all sorts of stories about why we shouldn't lose it. So we will start to see that and experiencing will open, will be more wholesome, less obstructed. But that can be quite disconcerting because you could be in full rant about something and the bodymind will present itself like [Osho inhales sharply] and there can really be a profound dislocation that can occur. Has anyone ever noticed that type of thing?

[Students concur]

[Osho]: Yes, profound dislocation. And we can take that to be upsetting. So there's this gap and then self-image will want to turn it into something else because it always wants to define and send out these sticky strings that are going to keep things in place. You keep practicing with it each time you notice anything about how you are. Practice with it. Don't ‘bother’: Don't follow along with that game of counting coloured stones. Discriminating: “This is the kind of thing we can practice with.” “This isn't.” So self-image will want to discriminate and it wants to discriminate in ways that say, “Okay, I was sitting here lost in thought but I was thinking about practice.”

[Laughter]

So, that's okay. And on the other hand we'll be sitting here thinking about what we are going to buy at the grocery store. Not okay. Both of them are the same thing, and both are practiced with, in exactly the same way, during formal practice. You will not lose the capacity to go to the grocery

store to get what you need to get; nor will you lose the capacity to practice. In fact, by practicing at either of those “gaps” that occur, opening to the larger context, practicing when you notice it, regardless of content, is what you are supposed to do. That is the instruction.

Anything else?

[Student]: I thought it very interesting the way you turned the word, the “gap”, on its head because when I first read the title of this Dharma Assembly I was thinking, “Oh, this is going to be a list of all the things I do bad when I'm practicing.”

[Osho]: I rest my case.

[Laughter]

[Osho]: That's what self-image does. Well, good for you for showing up.

[Laughter]

[Osho]: It is important to question. You know, that question, “What is it? What does it mean?” “What definition are you putting on it?” “What definition do I have.” Then we can know what we are talking about, more or less. The question gets us a little closer to the mark.

[Student]: I find that when that dislocation that you are talking about happens, self-image will try to take out the – what's happening now as like a new stance and say, like, “okay, now I'm mindful”, and to kind of, maybe, like cover over that dislocation or, like, make it manageable or something?

[Osho]: Always. The ticket is – self-image wanting to, as you say, make things manageable. It wants to be in control. It's prepared to lose all of its definitions about itself as long as it's in control still. So you start to recognize, as you are practicing, that any view that comes up about how you are and how the world is, is questionable. And you question it when you sit on the zafu by recognizing that you have an opportunity to practice. The draw of content is very strong. We're content junkies. We believe if we don't have the words, we don't have anything. That's what we believe: Words are more important than anything else.

Now, this is not true. Words did not come before human beings. In the course of evolution, words did not come before experience. Words developed so that there was a way of describing what was going on, what was happening, what was occurring. So the words were developed to describe what was occurring with experiencing. But now, the beginning of the 21st Century, we believe that words are more...

[Distant sound of tenzo-anja striking the lunch bell]

...significant than and more important than, the experience, the moment of experience. So we have developed more and better words.

I'm not saying that we go and live in a world where we are going [Osho makes a series of grunts]. Not at all. Unless you are talking to chimps, maybe, but even they are developing linguistic capacities. But let's just look more into what's actually being talked about, what's actually being presented in any situation.

[Student]: What if the pattern is self-destructive and then the whole issue of self-image wanting to disappear goes right to work against instead of being a help...

[Osho]: You see, it really doesn't matter what we call the contraction into a self. We could call it "self-destructive".

tive”; we could call it “self-enabling”; we could call it “positive”; we could call it “negative”. It doesn't matter what you call it when you are sitting on the cushion, and bear in mind what we are talking about most specifically, is actual practice, when we are actually sitting in formal zazen. What do we do with it? (...Because self-image will generate all sorts of stories). When you are practicing, and you are sitting zazen, and you notice any contraction, regardless of how self-image wants to label it: Feel the breath; sit up straight; tuck the chin in; feel the hands and the feet. Practice.

We spoke earlier, just at the beginning, about the use of forms. If you notice that there's a very strong pattern going on, and of course you feel it physically, as it were, because we do – any movement of mind produces some effect, as it were, in the body. So that patterns have a strength to them. Balance out that strength. So if you notice that the tendency is to move towards certain stories about the pattern which can be very strong; feel the hands with that same intensity; feel the feet and the knees and the spine with the same intensity; see the seeing with that same intensity. And rather than having this great lump of aggression that's aggressive all over, what you will find is that whatever that pattern was will balance out. There is a lot of energy available from any pattern, from any state, when you are working with it in that way. And of course, what you learn, what the bodymind learns sitting zazen, is encoded in the bodymind. It is whole-body learning. If you are working with something that is habitual and strong and you are working with it in that way, you will find that you may be involved in the rant off the cushion, in informal practice, and all of a sudden you get [Osho makes some kind of sound that seems related to release] and again there is that dislocation that can occur and it can scare us because self-image will come up with stories about losing your mind, “I really lost it. Yes, that's it, I've lost it”, because we don't have all those sticky bits that are working to keep us in one place, very solid, acting in a certain way, as we have habitually acted.

[Student]: Might do something weird.

[Osho]: Yes. Well, you can't get more weird than sitting facing the wall so you may as well get into the rest of it.

[Student]: Could it be that simple?

[Osho]: Yes, “we” know about it.

[Student]: It was very interesting, Osho, in answering James' question you used the word “questionable” and normally we perceive that as being dubious, it has a dubious connotation. And when you do think about questioning into things and there are so many things that you think I shouldn't question into because I would truly lose my mind. And it's um hmmm.

[Osho]: It's all questionable. It really is, from both senses of the word. Yes.

[Student]: I find sometimes, too, you'll be sitting there and then you realize and then you go back to the breath but the story before was really interesting? And then you are sitting there – “That was an interesting story, I'd like to go back to that, but that's okay because I am choosing to go back to it.”

[Osho]: Right, and that's what happens. It's not a problem, but once you start to notice that then you say “Okay, well I don't need to follow that do I? Won't lose it.” Most of our interesting stories, you know, we'll have access to should we want them for something like to make a point or to tell someone an interesting story or to write it down. The stories cease to draw us. They lose their interest for us, really, after a while, after seeing them in context.

[Student]: You've mentioned about practicing using the energy of the...can't think of the word now...the strong tendencies...to take that energy and apply it to the practice and I am thinking that I have experienced a lot of, oftentimes in practice, a drowsiness or apathy or just passivity or...it's just a real...I think drowsiness speaks for quite a lot of it. How do you take that energy? It almost feels like a lack of energy and how do you directly deal with something like that and turn it into the strength of that? It doesn't feel like a strength at all. It feels like the sense of a lack of strength or interest. So how do you take that and turn it into practice?

[Osho]: Well, the first thing, as soon as you notice it, a drowsiness – it could be the eyes flick down, they start to close and there is the narrowing of the visual field. When you notice that, feel the breath, sit up straight, really sit up straight, really feel the spine, because you've noticed. So in the moment of noticing you can exercise a little Samatha or will or effort. So you can straighten in that moment. And then when you have done that you can feel the hands, you can feel the feet. Do not expect it to be continuous once you've done it. This is another thing that we will do with practice: We think, “There, yes, okay. That's it. Now I'm bright-eyed and bushy-tailed so I am going to be like this for the rest of the sitting and for all sittings ever after.” Well, it's not true.

[Laughter]

[Osho]: But for that moment you have practiced. Practice is practicing with what's going on in the moment and yes, we do get tired. We might have a cold. We might be getting older.

[Laughter]

[Osho]: We want things to be the same and solid. That's self-image. Nothing is the same. Everything really is changing. We've all lost trillions of cells since we walked into the Hatto this morning. So there is this constant change. But we will lock ourselves into being a certain way. We will say, "Yeah, that's it. I'm too tired." And the bodymind seems to go "Oh? Tired. You want tired? Okay." That's what it does; it's just interesting in that way. Like...try not to think of a pink Buddha. Right? What happens?

[Laughter]

[Student]: Pink Buddha.

[Osho]: Right. That's how the bodymind is. It's incredibly intelligent, so rather than not recognizing that, let's recognize it and recognize that every little thought, every little "bip bip" that comes along affects how we are. Why fall for just one story? And it's usually the least interesting one about how we are and tends toward incapacity. We are very good at incapacity.

So it's not about making yourself a certain way. It's practicing with whatever is going on in that moment. Practice is practice of your life up to the point of death. When you are sick you can practice; when we are losing capacity we can practice. Okay?

Is there anything else?

[Pause]

[Osho]: Birth, old age, sickness and death, and in between there's this moment and this moment and this moment and this moment and you start to see each one more and more clearly with all the richness present that is actually occurring, that the bodymind is actually responding to. You might as well notice it. It's your life.

Was there something?

[Student]: There seem to be three moments between

the duration and decaying of the moment and the building of the next: There seems to be states or nothing or gap. Are we choosing gap, also?

[Osho]: Well, let's see. You spoke about the arising and decaying of moments. Well, "moment" is only a word and we are using it to describe something that is continuous, basically. There's moment after moment after moment. It is not as if there are little things that arise as a moment and then another moment and that one's gone. So language is very liquid when we're talking about practice because of course it's not describing anything solid. So let's just say there is the vastness of Awareness; the vastness of Knowing; or the vastness of experiencing. That's what we are talking about. So in that there arise moments of experience that arise, decay and fall and yes, in between moments of experience that are noticed, there is a gap. No moment of experience is continuous. So we are practicing that moment, that gap.

Does that clarify?

[Student]: Yes. Sometimes when we talk about "nothing", I mean in the teisho, are we also talking about the same thing there as that gap?

[Osho]: I would need the context of the particular teisho, so you are certainly welcome to get the context and then we can talk about the question bearing in mind, as I said at the beginning, that Roshi used the word "gap" in our practice, in one particular teisho. But the word was being used at that time in a different way than I am using it now. No word is the be-all and the end-all and the final word to describe whatever, nor are they describing the same thing. And that in itself is a very interesting thing to look at, to start to look at how language is used and what it is actually describing. We take a lot of things for granted so most of us



spend a lot of our time not knowing what's going on at all, which is not in the sense of practice, but just if we're out and about, what's being talked about. And we fail to notice even incredibly incongruent things like advertisers telling us to express our individuality by all getting the same thing. You know.

[Laughter]

[Osho]: It's almost lunch time, so we will have practice interviews in the afternoon. Is there any last moment...

[Student]: Since I notice the breath, why can't I just let the body breathe? It's kind of like I have to go one-two-three, one-two-three. It seems like if I stop running it, it would just stop working. I've been working for a long time to let that go and as soon as I pay attention to it, it is like having to manage it.

[Osho]: Here's what you can do with that; just notice when you are doing that pattern, when that pattern is running, and then just feel the body moving with it, just for that moment. You are just noticing this phenomena and over time, and with practice of each moment that you notice, it will shift. How you are understanding it, how you are doing it, what pattern comes up, will change. And most probably you won't stop breathing at that point.

[Laughter]

[Osho]: Anything else at all?

[Student]: Roshi said during Mishin shramon's ordination, "*You think you've seen fun, you've seen nothing yet; and if you think you've seen fear, you haven't seen nothing yet. Wait till you see nothing.*" And I am wondering if I understand that the nothing has...seems to get recognized

sometimes through our practice and seems to be what's between moments. So I am wondering if that's an aspect or another way of talking about gaps between moments. I am wondering if I understand that or...?

[Osho]: Well, what you are trying to do here is something that we commonly do in practice, you are trying to make a quilt out of it – taking little bits from here and little bits from there, and trying to come up with a seamless whole. Okay? This is what we do; we've been taught how to do this. What we want to see is how we are doing that, how that occurs, how that pattern comes up. This is definitely self-image trying to pull together bits and pieces to try to make this seamless whole without recognizing that the seamless whole is what is.

Anything else?

[Student]: Just a quick observation, that would replacing a pattern with another pattern not be a sort of covering a hole with a hole?

[Osho]: That's not what we are doing. That's one way people have worked with things such as negative thoughts. There're some instances where people will say, “take a negative thought, turn it into a positive thought,” so in that sense what you are saying is very accurate. Yes, covering a hole with a hole, wasting a lot of time. But seeing a pattern, practicing with a pattern so that you are not acting it out, this is what happens with zazen. You are sitting there, you are seeing patterns, you are recognizing them eventually as such, you are feeling the breath, you are sitting up straight. You are practicing. By not feeding into it, it's wearing out. So you are not replacing it with anything. You are wearing it out so that it is no longer there. You still won't

forget to, you know, get the Piccadilly Line and get off at South Harrow if you are going to Harrow Zazenkaï to sit when you are in London.

[Osho strikes gong]

*DAINEN-JI, SEPTEMBER 28, 2002*



Monks' Hall where Dogen zenji sat  
Tiantong-si, China  
Shikai Zuiko 1991

## **Maintaining the Way**

**Dharma Talk by Ven. Shikai Zuiko osho**

**November 22, 2003, Dainen-ji**

Thank you for taking the time to come to this Dharma Assembly entitled *Maintaining the Way*. On the poster, what you see is the kechimiyaku, the blood line of the Lineage. Lineage is our Ancestors. They are our family. They are the people who through many countries and cultures and times maintained the Way through the integrity of their own practice. Sometimes what we do is think of these people as being distant from us in the sense of possessing extraordinary capacities that we could never have. We can view them as giants, as icons, as something that we could never be. But that is not true.

You came here this morning and I'm sure there may have been one or two thoughts that came up for you such as "Why do I do this to myself? I've been working hard all week. I really deserve a good rest. I have much to do. Oh my goodness, why did I commit? Why? Why? Why?" Each of those thoughts that you noticed and practiced with prove that you have what it takes to do this practice and to do exactly what the Lineage was talking about, which is Wake Up to the reality of who you really are before all of your embarrassing little stories.

Sometimes we don't think of people, like the Buddha for instance, as people just like us because there are lots of stories around and we do like stories. And it is said that the Buddha, some 2600 years ago, after doing all sorts of things which we are all familiar with and which he may or may not have done, finally one day sat down under a tree and said, "That's it. I am not moving until I've figured it out. I am not moving until I know what's really going on and what it is to be a human being, what it is to be in this bodymind." And so he sat and sat and sat through the night.

We really don't know how many nights that night actually was, but the stories say that sometime during the night he was assaulted by the "tempter", Mara [Osho whistles something reminiscent of the musical score from "The Twilight Zone", evoking laughter from students]. And we all drum up our little pictures of what that was.

Now, Anzan roshi talks about Mara as being basically the forces of distortion. And when we fall into those distortions we cause ourselves to suffer. So you work during the week, so you were a little tired when you woke up this morning, so there was a thought about how there may be other things that you would prefer to do. So had you fallen into those thoughts, had you directed attention into that thought of the impossibility of attending today, we could say about you that you fell into and were seduced by Mara, the tempter. But you didn't. You recognized a thought as a thought and you put one foot in front of the other and here you are, right here, right now, in the year 2003, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. For 2600 years, as we have said, men and women have done this practice. They have put their butt down on the zafu or a pile of straw or a rock or whatever was handy and practiced this moment of their life by feeling the breath, by feeling the bones, sitting up straight, opening the eye gaze, and recognizing that in this moment, you are Buddha. You are Awake Awareness Itself. The practice is cleaning up all those obstructions that get in the way, that provide distractions and distortions for us.

Now, all families have stories. This family, this Lineage, has its stories. So pull up your zafu, set your hair on fire as you practice, and we will go back in time so that you can see that calendar in your mind's eye, just like an old black and white movie: 2003, 2002, 2001, 2000, 1999, 1998...way, way back to the year 1979.

Some of you weren't even born then, and in 1979 the population of the world was 4.37 billion beings – or people

really – there were more beings than that. The Shah of Iran had been ousted by the Ayatollah Khomeini; Rhodesia became Zimbabwe, and a black African was elected leader of that country; the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan; Margaret Thatcher was elected Prime Minister of Britain. There was a nuclear accident at Three Mile Island in the U.S.; Vietnam and Vietnam-backed Cambodians announced that Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia had fallen and the regime of Pol Pot was over; Iranian militants seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran and took hostages.

We watched films: *Alien*, *Apocalypse Now*, *All that Jazz*, *Monty Python's Life of Brian*. Leonard Cohen received the Order of Canada and Mother Teresa, the Nobel Prize. We listened to The Talking Heads *Fear of Music*; Marian Faithful grinding out *Broken English*; Roxy Music released *Manifesto*; David Bowie, *Lodger*; Frank Zappa *Sheik Yerbouti*. Sid Vicious of the Sex Pistols died of a drug overdose in New York. Bob Marley released *Survival*. Punk met Reggae. The Village People released *YMCA* and inspired overalls as couture, releasing all of us from the hell of flares and bellbottoms. Designer jeans took off; the Walkman was introduced and *Trivial Pursuit* was the game.

On the weekend of January 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>, a huge blizzard brought many cities, including Ottawa, to a standstill. At that time I was producing and directing for the CBC in Ottawa and I made an extensive trip to Britain, where I had the worst bad hair day ever: a frizzy permanent, burnt hair actually, in a very pricey hair boutique on King's Road. I looked as if I had shredded wheat glued to my scalp.

In Southern Ontario, in a barn, Joshu roshi gave a teisho to monks, including Anzan Hoshin, then "Sensei". The teisho was *Water Burns the Stone*. The location: Hakukaze-ji, or "the Barndo", in Southern Ontario. Little did I know at the time that I really didn't have to worry about my bad hair.

## Water Burns the Stone

Teisho by Ven. Yasuda Joshu Dainen roshi

Hakukaze-ji, 1979

[originally printed in "Zanmai" Issue 1, Winter 1989]

Effort, effort, effort. Your shoulders are stiff, your foreheads are tight, your knuckles are white and your underpants smell. What's wrong with you? We are only three days into this sesshin. Where do you think you're going?

*"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 bald man, 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."*

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.

Shugyosha! (Practitioners!) Where are you going in such a hurry there in your lotus postures? To the wash-room? 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. Roshi 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.

Oh, but wait! (BANG!) If you relax too much, you are lost in a pile of loose, slack thoughts and flabby posture.

So what is the right way? Well, that's up to you. This body and mind of yours is the Way, the Way of all Buddhas. You have to find out by experience the sharpest mind, vastest mind. Vastest, Vast-est. My pronunciation, please excuse. Vast-est MIND, vast-est BODY is this body-mind. You have to find this. But of course I have something to say on this matter.

First I must say something about matter of Teacher and student. You have to find your own Way. You are your own Way. However, delusion is from no-beginning, is beginningless. No matter how much you sweep the room of your mind, the dust of continual Birth and Death, of concept after concept, image after image, continues to fall all over the floor, the furniture, covers up the windows. So it is easy for you to deceive yourselves. Student's mind and Teacher's mind are same Buddha's mind so Teacher must

show student it is only this mind, must exert himself from bones and belly until there is nothing left of him for the sake of his students. Students must exert themselves to understand Teacher's mind through understanding their own minds. This is zazen! This is dokusan! My Way is not your Way. You cannot copy, cannot dress up in Teacher's mind. Enter this moment, have true entry into this moment of zazen, teisho, dokusan, work, sleep, eating and it is this Way, beyond mine, beyond yours.

I'll tell you a little story. But it's not a bedtime story so pay attention, sit straight. Now, once upon a time....was a master named Gutei, Gutei daiosho. Gutei was master and was called Teacher of one finger Zen. When asked a true question, Gutei always answered truly by holding up his finger like this. Ya, this is how Gutei would seize the moment and seize the student in the midst of the student's circumstances. No matter what question, Gutei would just do this one finger answer. "What is Buddha?" One finger. "My knees hurt, what should I do?" One finger. What is Gutei saying? Hold up finger, hold up finger, always, hai? Why? What is Gutei's mind? So students would wake up like this. Really. (laughs)

Now Gutei had a jisha (attendant) who had taken to answering questions about his master's Teachings by imitating his master, holding up his finger. I think you all remember this koan. Gutei grabbed hold of this student one day, grabbed his jisha when he was doing this, and brutally hacked off his finger. OUCH! Don't worry, it's only a teaching story, okay (laughter, Roshi laughs). As the jisha ran away crying, sobbing, Gutei called out his name. The jisha stopped and turned. Gutei held up his one finger. The attendant Woke Up. Hai. Nice story. But, in the same way, if you try to use my way for your way, I will brutally hack it away because your Zen cannot be fake Zen, pretend Zen.

To understand Teacher's mind is to understand the

mind of the Buddhas. This means to understand your mind. Have dokusan with yourself! Have dokusan with your breath. Have dokusan with your koan, with your zafu! It is no distant thing. It is right here. Right here is Gutei's finger Zen. Raise the mind of the Way like Gutei held up his finger, raising his finger just like this. Sit just like this.

How should we practice? Too much effort is delusion, struggle. Too little is delusion. You can't struggle into enlightenment and you can't just listen to me say that this moment is it and pretend that you are living it. You have to practice fully, with pure samadhi, pure awareness. Seeing, seeing.

And in each instant is instantaneous enlightenment. In the Soto Way cause and effect is simultaneous. In Rinzai, cause is one thing, effect another. Now, naturally, both of these views are bullshit and gospel truth. What we have to do is practice without end, without goal, without strategy. Strat-e-gy. Each moment of true effort is both enlightenment and the Path to enlightenment. True effort is like water. It flows and fills the hollows, it goes where it needs to. Subtle. Subt-le. You can't hold water back with your bare hands and can't push it forward. It moves freely, clearly. Slowly, water will burn away the rocks of your delusions. Always water is fresh. Quickly, water flows.

Okay! Enough. If you remember any of this, remember that water burns the stone.

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*[The following is based on the text, "Quick to Strike: a Brief Biography of Ven. Yasuda Joshu Hakukaze roshi" by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi, originally printed in "Zanmai": Issue 7, Winter 1991]*

And in 1979 that teisho ended in that moment and

monks, including Anzan Hoshin roshi, practiced that moment of enlightenment, that moment of clear seeing. Joshu roshi, your grandfather in Dharma was 84 when he presented that teisho in Hakukaze-ji. He was born in 1895 in Japan, into a Samurai family. And as with all Samurai families of that time there was a great deal of difficulty as they were entering the new Meiji Era, the era of western civilization, the stuff of the time, the Meiji Era of westernization. Their role in society was becoming more and more meaningless and many families had great debts that they had incurred with the previously despised merchant class.

The Yasuda family was almost penniless and when he, Joshu-to-become, was proven to be inept in social graces and with no apparent aptitude that would help the family address their financial concerns, the boy was sent off to live with, and become a student of, his uncle, a Soto Zen priest and master, Hanumatsu Daiji. Daiji daiosho was a monk in the Hakukaze Stream of the Soto Lineage. Now this is a line of hermits and ragged mountain monks and Daiji daiosho lived in a small ramshackle temple called “Tenku-in”, “Empty Sky Temple”.

Living with Daiji daiosho in these circumstances was not at all to the young boy’s liking, but he received ordination as a novice monk and he was named Joshu after the famous Chinese Tang Dynasty master because, as Daiji daiosho said, it was not at all certain whether or not “*this dog of a boy had Buddha nature or not*”. A month or two of cold gruel and grueling ice cold, as Joshu roshi described it to Anzan Hoshin roshi, and after interminable hours of zazen and scrubbing floors, he decided that he would fare much better as a beggar on the streets. So he escaped through the window one night. He ran away and found himself lost in the mountains, no shelter, and he was afraid to return to the temple even if he could have because he had no idea what his weird old uncle and Teacher would do to him and he didn’t want to find out.

Well, the Teacher didn't bother to look for him for a couple of days and finally, though, he did and he found him huddled, shivering, in a lean-to that he'd put together of fallen branches against a rock face. Daiji Tenku just said that he was out strolling and just happened to find Joshu. *"In any case", the Master said, "I'm surprised at your diligence and deep sincerity. I never would have thought that a boy like you who seemed to be so lazy and arrogant, would have the spirit to go off by himself like this in order to do a hermitage retreat or some solitary, intensive zazen. All the great monks and Teachers of our Lineage have done this kind of practice and so I am deeply moved to find you like this. I am so deeply moved that I can hardly speak. Still, while I admire your strength and determination I think that these conditions are a little extreme. It's a good thing that I just happen to have some rice balls and some tea with me."* So saying, he helped Joshu to move his lean-to to a more sheltered location, he built a fire and left him some quilts and food, gave him some instructions for his practice, and promised to return the next day to bring him more food and to give him dokusan.

This was Joshu's first hermitage and it lasted for two weeks. Following this the young monk's appetite for Zen became insatiable. He ate his way steadily through every Teaching that Daiji daisho had to offer. He chewed his way through the *Shobogenzo* of Dogen zenji, the three main koan collections, and received his Master's Transmission when he was barely 20. His name at Shiho was "Dainen" which means "great thought instant" which means that in the arising of each moment of experience he knew the actual nature of experiencing.

And here you sit at Dainen-ji today, the monastery that was established by Anzan Hoshin roshi, "Great Thought Instant Temple", "Great Moment of Experience Temple", "Great Actual Nature of Experiencing Temple". When Joshu received his Teacher's Inka or full Transmission, he was

given the name “Hakukaze” or “White Wind”, a name that all Teachers of this Lineage bear after the great Master, Sogaku Hakukaze.

Sometime in the early 1920s, he went to Soji-ji, at the new location in Yokohama and to Eihei-ji. He went to Eihei-ji mainly to learn their extremely detailed oryoki style. After this, Joshu roshi continued to practice with his Teacher at Tenku-in and in hermitage, and as had Daiji daiosho, to avoid becoming a parish priest within the organization of the Soto Zen Church. He taught a few students here and there but none seemed to him to show much promise at realizing the mind of great and perfect practice.

It was very difficult to establish a temple or to teach in the years before and during the buildup to the Pacific war because the government was acting to suppress Buddhism and support Shinto as the state religion. Since the 1860s, great waves of anti-Buddhist sentiment had crashed down again and again, driving many monks into lay life as their temples were burned down. There had been an attempt to unify the three main Zen Schools, the Rinzai, Soto and Obaku, in order to make them easier to control. During this time great schisms appeared in the Soto School until a central bureau was formed to monitor and minister the income of the various main temples and their daughter houses. Many Buddhist temples were seized by the government and converted into Shinto shrines or just shut down altogether. In response to this the climate amongst the various Japanese Buddhist schools became one of obsequious accommodation to government and military policies. As well, Zen had often in Japan’s history, been misused as a means to justify acceptance of, and spiritualization for, whatever military or political establishment was dominant. Joshu roshi would later speak of hearing a teisho at a Rinzai temple, in which the Teacher said that “*the sound of one hand is the land of the rising sun*”.

In this environment the young teacher avoided having

very much to do with what he saw as a loathsome and heart-breaking corruption of the Dharma. This attitude led him into severe conflicts and made him decidedly unpopular. Joshu roshi once told Anzan Hoshin roshi of an incident in which a major hierarch of the Soto Zen establishment was speaking to him of the necessity of nations to develop and show their strength and power and of Japan's imperial right to colonize and control Manchuria, China, and Asia as a whole. Outraged, Roshi pulled an iron fan from his yotai and snapped it against the other monk's crown. *"Where is there anything which is a nation? Can you feel that? Can you? This is what is going on, right now, right here. This moment has no room for nations, wars or control."* The hierarch did not seem to appreciate Roshi's little teaching.

Soon after this, in 1934, Joshu roshi left Japan and traveled through Asia. For the next 20-odd years he journeyed from Manchuria to mainland China, to Korea, Burma, Thailand, and India. There he studied the different ways in which the Dharma was understood, practiced, and taught. He had seen in Japan that the Dharma was corrupted whenever it became part of a society's life and culture instead of remaining a practice for realizing liberation. And so he wanted to see how the Dharma was affected by different cultures and what this meant about how the peoples of those cultures would be able to realize the Dharma.

After this he returned to Japan, around 1952. His Teacher's temple, Tenku-in, had been confiscated by the government and had later burnt down. Hanamatsu Daiji roshi was still active, living, and teaching, here and there in the homes of students. Joshu roshi began to teach and eventually gave transmission to three students, one of whom, Nishitama Myoko, was a woman. It had been customary for women to receive transmission as the teacher of nuns and of lay women, but such teachers could not themselves teach men or give transmission. The situation of Soto Zen nuns began to improve in the 1970s. This set off another disagreement

with some elements in the Soto Zen establishment, some of whom still held grudges since the 1930s, for Joshu roshi's anti-war statements. In disgust, Joshu roshi left Japan for the last time in 1964 and began to travel throughout Asia, Europe, and even America. Apparently he traveled incognito and without a passport of any kind.

In Europe in the late 1960s he met a group of young people who began to study with him. One who received the Dharma name, Mushin, and later was ordained as a monk, was a Canadian who owned some farmland in southern Ontario. He offered this land to Joshu roshi to use to establish a monastery. Soon after this Roshi and a band of ragged hippie-generation students arrived near Hamilton and began to convert a small farmhouse into the Abbott's quarters and bathing facilities, and an old barn into a Zendo. This was Hakukaze-ji. The community once swelled as large as 25 monks. And we are approaching the time of year when our Abbott, Anzan Hoshin roshi, goes into hermitage in memory of the death of Joshu Dainen roshi.

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We maintain the Way by the integrity of our practice in each moment. When we feel the doorknob of Dainen-ji in our hand and we open that big main door and step inside, we are leaving the world of social convention and culture behind and entering into a timeless moment, a place unaffected by the conventions of social culture which has almost destroyed the Dharma. Use each moment during this Dharma Assembly today to look into patterns as they arise and make a choice to practice noticing that moment of experience,



to practice what is true. Each moment of seeing the truth of your experience is the only moment that you can practice, is the only moment that you can maintain the Way. It is the same moment everywhere, for all beings, all times.

Thank you for listening.

# **Freedom and Tyranny**

a series of three Dharma Talks and Mondo

## **1: Overthrowing the Inner Dictator**

Limbs flopping and puppet-like in a mockery of life, hundreds of emaciated bodies turn and roll as they are bulldozed into pits. A puppy lies whimpering, abandoned, in a vacant lot, one paw cut off as a gang initiation. The raped and mutilated corpse of a child rots in the wreckage of what once was a church in the Congo. An airplane crashes into a skyscraper.

Events like this have occurred, do occur, and most probably will continue to occur, everywhere and often in our world, even right now. They have one thing in common: They are the end result of contraction. Someone convinced themselves and sometimes others, at some point, that such actions were justified, warranted, and the right thing to do. Actions were dictated.

Overthrowing our inner dictator means we have to look past its propaganda to what is going on for us, really, right now.

Roshi has said that practice is too intimate to be personal. It's not about your experiencing alone; it's not specific to a particular type or group of human beings. This raises a major point: The process of experiencing is the same for every human being who has walked on the face of the planet.

Dictators may be called Il Duce, or General Pinochet, or Idi Amin Dada. The slogans may be from the Bible or the Koran or Mein Kampf or a Constitution. We may call our contracted states fear, anger, irritation, or frustration. The name, the label, the story about the cause, is not the experience being described or what we are actually experiencing.

Another point: The label, what we choose to call this experience we have just noticed, is just a word. It is not the experience. It is a metaphor for the experience. We have become very used to labels. We like them; we even love them; we think they mean something. Slap on a label and we think we know what we are talking about. We nod our collective heads when we hear a label and we say “Yeah, yeah, that’s it. Yeah, yeah, I know that one” and then go back to what we are really interested in – ourself and how this relates to “me”. “How do I feel about it?”

Labels, however, can be more or less useful. When the title for this Dharma Assembly was announced, a student emailed a request for registration. The student liked the idea of “overthrowing the inner dictator” and as well, wanted to know what to do about the “inner judiciary”. It can be called the “inner prosecutor”, a “material witness”, a “bureaucracy”, or the “Ministry for Nice Deeds”. I don’t care what you call it. We’ve got to stop. The inner judiciary or the inner dictator, of course, doesn’t exist in any form anyway. The bodymind doesn’t contain a cartoon dictator with a uniform and a peculiar moustache or a figure that looks like our mother, or our father, or a spouse, who is always telling us what to do. There is no dark side or evil twin, no Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

However, the metaphor of dictator is very accurate because it can seem as if we have no choice but to follow the commands of this tyrant. A dictator is defined as *“a tyrant, a leader who rules with absolute power and usually with force; too radical in the exercise of power or authority, dictators can be cruel and irrational in insisting on complete obedience. Tyrants threaten and give harsh punishment for disobedience.”*

Dictatorships are states ruled by tyrants. When we get into a state about anything, caused by passion, aggression, or stupidity, we are ruled by the contraction, tyrannized and

dictated to by the content of the thoughts we have allowed attention to fall into and the patterns we allow to play out.

As Anzan roshi says in *The Straight Path*, commenting on the *Satipatthana sutta*:

*“A contracted mind is a shriveled mind, a fixated mind. A mind that is limited is a mind that has been overcome. It means literally “underneath,” a time when one is falling into despair, or pride or any other such state or mood, without recognizing that fact.”*

Roshi goes on to say that:

*“A mind which is ‘unlimited’, or anuttara, is a mind in which no mental state is predominant, a mind which is very open at that time.”*

Earlier in the commentary he had said that:

*“The word that we have translated as ‘open’, or mahagatam, also means ‘greatness’. It is a mind which has the quality of not being dominated by any of the states that are arising.”*

States don't have to be big or forceful to have an impact. They happen to us everyday. We wake up in the morning. That little voice says, *“I'm so tired, too tired to sit. Don't get up.”* And we stay in bed. The dictator has been obeyed. Dictators and tyrants puff up and get more powerful the more they are obeyed. The motto of Mussolini's Italian Fascist Party was *“Crederi. Obbedire. Combatterie”*: *“Believe. Obey. Fight.”*

We believe our story of being too tired. We obey by staying in bed until it is too late and then we start to defend our stance because, after all, we should have gotten up. We

will likely become defensive and aggressive if a teacher or a practice advisor questions us. The content and discursiveness are not the state; they are the propaganda of the state. This example is mild and not very sexy and for those reasons may help us see the mechanism more clearly. (We are content junkies and can be very easily distracted.)

Another favourite campaign for the inner dictator is “understanding” or rather, the inability to understand the Teachings. We hear a teisho or a reading and because it is new to us, may have names we are not familiar with, or may speak too directly to how we are, familiar patterns arise: “I don’t understand” fires off at the first opportunity and our attention salutes. As attention congeals, the senses contract, and we actually become less capable of understanding. The propaganda machine whirrs into action, stories start to proliferate. The stories usually have a theme of worthlessness and impossibility. More examples that “fit” are dredged up. They reinforce and concretize the state. We believe them. The stories propagate other stories that fit. If they don’t fit, the parts that don’t match up are simply ignored. We obey the instruction we have given ourselves to not understand and the fight starts.

The nature of the fight varies from force directed at oneself; self-criticism, derogatory comments about oneself. These cause the contraction to tighten. The power and force of the state increases with the fuel of more and more attention. The bodymind becomes more and more uncomfortable and feels more and more pressure. This can escalate into banging a desk or a wall, yelling or crying, or actually to the point of hitting oneself. The force of contraction can also be directed against others. We may start off with criticism of another person, and escalate to hurling derogatory, nasty, hurtful comments at someone or something else. The bodymind seems to puff up its chest, breathing becomes difficult, muscles become tight, the face

is inflamed, the chin points sharply up and out like that of Mussolini, El Duce.

The momentum of the state builds and contraction continues to that very painful point. Our red, squinty eyes blink or bulge in wonder as they search for a target. We spy something. That something is “other” to our “self”, to our “state”. It is “other” and therefore, enemy. We lash out and hit someone or break something. A victory for the inner dictator.

“Fascist” comes from “fascio”, which means “bundle” or “group” and describes something which is difficult to break if it is bound together or organized: a bundle of firewood, for instance. “Skandha” in Sanskrit, means “piles” or “heaps” or “bundles” or “binding groups”. As Anzan roshi states in *The Straight Path*:

*“‘Skandha’ is the word used to describe how experience is displaying itself, how a moment of perception and cognition arises in the context of self-image. First there is form, which is a moment of freezing, of knowing that something is being known. This is the process of objectification, which is how knowing occurs within self-image, within a structure of dualism. So there is a moment of crystallization or freezing. Then one begins to check it out with the next skandha of basic reactivity. You check it out to see if you can get something from it, or to see if it’s going to threaten you or if you can just ignore it as much as possible. And then it starts to become sharper and clearer through the third skandha of symbolization: what is it? Perhaps a sound; perhaps a feeling – you aren’t quite sure yet and then as it builds up, you begin to relate it to previous experiences and to look for something similar to compare it to. With the fourth skandha, habitual patterning, you determine how you will relate to it. And then finally there is the fifth skandha, the moment of becoming ‘conscious’ of it.”*

When these five piles, or heaps, or bundles, or binding groups, of perception and cognition are left unquestioned, they produce conditioned experience. Things pile up, unnoticed. Suddenly we may find ourselves laughing or crying for no real reason, but perfectly convinced of what it might be at the time. We may experience great waves of contraction and heat or even nausea. We can slap a label on it and say that we are frustrated, angry, ecstatic, bored, in love, in hate, or sick. We can sob and moan and whine or become aggressive.

In the early stages of this practice, however long that may be, everyone experiences sudden, profound feelings which are often described as desolation, loneliness, anger, and so forth. If we are not aware of the process and compulsively react, we can cause suffering to ourselves and to others. The dictator rallies an army. Practice is the way to disarm that army and to overthrow the dictator.

The symbol of the Fascists was fasces, bundles of sticks used for flogging, wrapped around an axe for capital punishment. It's quite an accurate and fitting description of the way we beat ourselves up through allowing states to propagate and, in far too many cases, allowing them to propagate to the point of homicide, suicide or genocide. A state can kill.

Other tendencies of historical Fascism also describe the behaviour we can fall into when we are taken over by an inner dictator: attacking others who are different or, in fact, making others different, *"You people are just too weird"* or *"Those people from the other village smell funny. Let's kill them"*. Trying to reduce others to impotency, *"What do you know? You're stupid, you can't teach me anything. I'm unteachable"*; elevating death as the true fulfillment of life: *"I'd rather die than give up this view of myself"* or *"I'll kill myself, I'd be better off dead"*. Indoctrinating oneself as superior, *"I don't need to do this. I'm better than all of you as it is"*. Keeping

everyone else subservient to the state, *“If you loved me, you would let me do what I want”* or *“I know I’ve been told to be on time and not keep people waiting but I really need this drink of water”*. Introducing severe censorship and not talking about what is going on in case it will cause you to be viewed badly, *“I’m an angry person; I’ve always been angry”* or pitifully, *“I don’t understand. I don’t understand anything. I must be stupid.”*

In order to maintain a belief in the kind of sweeping statements that a state can and does make, we have to ignore most of our experience. Hand-to-hand with censorship comes the propaganda of the state. In order to have “always” been angry, we have to sift through all of our experiences and ignore the 99% of the time when we weren’t angry, when we were happy or just in neutral, distracted, or sleeping, or otherwise engaged. The state can and does defend itself as it scans through memory and comes up with distortions of stories to support its chosen slogan. When this is pointed out, the dictator can become irrational, incoherent, mumbling about *“not having the words”* or *“You wouldn’t understand”* or *“Off with their heads! Off with their heads!”* But even this is okay in the view of the dictator as the cultivation of irrationality and impulse is viewed as more important than coherency and logical thought which can be, and is, seen, as cold, unfeeling, inhuman, and a domain of the intellect.

Fascism is also marked by nostalgia, a longing for a “prior good time”. Students often hold this as a story in the early stages of practice, although it may not be spoken about; stories along the line of *“Everything was better before I started to practice. I don’t want to see things this clearly. I was getting along just fine, now this. I wish things could be like they were before.”* Or even trying to produce the memory of a good sitting so that it can be re-created. Or things standing out so vividly for them and they say, *“Wha! This is*



*just like when I was smoking grass!*” And we don’t see what we are doing; we don’t see that inner dictator arranging experiences. We are deluding ourselves. We are ignoring reality.

Being late for a sitting and keeping others waiting; striking the gong too hard because we are angry or distracted, or forgetting to strike the gong because we are busy figuring out what we are going to say when we are asked how our practice is; speaking too quickly or with too much force; writhing in the contractions and contortions of not understanding; wishing we were dead; yelling at someone; hating or loving them to distraction, are all vivid examples of the inner dictatorship. Self-image is tyrannizing us and for a moment has taken over.

We all have recognized, or are in the process of recognizing, more clearly that we can and must practice to stop that cycle of tyranny. Each moment we notice anything at all about how we are and practice mindfulness of breath and the whole body we are making ourselves available to openness. A bodymind which is open cannot be dominated by any of the states that are arising.

A soldier holds a gun to a prisoner’s head and fires. We gasp and say, “*I don’t understand how someone can do that.*” A naked girl, burning with napalm, runs screaming down a road in Asia. We cover our eyes and whisper, “*How terrible, how terrible*”, forgetting that someone just like *us* pushed the button that sprayed the chemical. We see the endless black and white photographs of the ‘disappeared’ and the pyramids of skulls from the Killing Fields and we conveniently forget that other human beings *just like us* were the perpetrators. We like to think we are different but in truth I hope we will never have cause to find out whether we are right about that.

Practicing looking into experiencing as it arises, is the way to undo these bundles of misunderstandings and

contraction. Practicing noticing the arising of a state and allowing it to open by feeling the breath, seeing the seeing, hearing the hearing, frees us from conditioned experiencing and allows us to become true human beings. Paying attention to the arising and decaying of moments of experiencing rather than following anything, leaves us open to the richness of our lives in this moment. Seeing the reality of experiencing as it really is frees us from the lies and suffering caused by our own dictators.

After the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, Anzan roshi spoke to the community of practitioners at a formal sitting. It was the most truthful and useful statement of all the statements I have heard or read about this event.

*“Birth and death are happening in each moment. This is always the case. Being mindful of this Great Matter of birth and death is not a matter of telling ourselves stories about it, but of being sensitive to the sheer vulnerability of ourselves and of all beings. The events of Tuesday, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 are deeply shocking and truly terrible. But events of greater and lesser scale are always occurring every day. This is the world as it is.*

*The states of aggression that have led to this violence occurred to people on a greater or lesser scale every day. This is the world as it is. Passion, aggression and stupidity are the three klesas, the three poisons that arise from the contraction of dividing our lives into self and other. Our practice is to see through the contraction of self-image and release the gestures of attention that arise from it. We do this through the practice of whole-bodily mindfulness, moment to moment.”*

Thank you for listening.

## Mondo

[Osho]: Is there anything that you would like to talk about that has come up during this Dharma Assembly so far?

[Student]: Osho, may I say something?

[Osho]: Yes.

[Student]: Probably the most suspicious little dictator that comes up is the one that says, as you say, there are other things that would be better to do in this time. There's guilt at just sitting when there's so many things to do. I guess...how to stop it...?

[Osho]: Hazard a guess.

[Laughter]

[Osho]: The content doesn't matter. And if it has come up often enough so that you can actually identify it, talk about it, you can reasonably expect that until it's worn out, it is going to come up again. So see it for what it is, which is a habit. It's a pattern. And feel the breath, sit up straight and then you may notice that there can often be an expectation that once it has been dealt with once that it's not going to happen again. That's not true. So each moment you deal with whatever it is that comes up in that moment.

Thank you for the question. Anything else?

[Student]: A comment on what you were saying about the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> and how they were interpreted by Roshi. I happen to have been with a group of people who were involved with international development work as that was happening and, by all of those people, I think I can

safely say, it was accepted in the way that you described that Roshi described it: that this is another thing that happens. It wasn't...

I think there are a lot of people who do accept things like that.

[Osho]: And recognize that that's one event in the midst of many. Thank you.

Anything else?

Well, I am sure a few will pop up this afternoon. So, time to deal with the process of overthrowing that dictator. So if you would turn and face the wall...

***DAINEN-JI, NOVEMBER 24, 2001***

## 2: Isms and Ists: The Language of Self-image

Solipsism, euphemism, pessimism, nihilism, negativism, positivism, legalism, cynicism, terrorism, imperialism, dogmatism, baptism, conservatism, liberalism, centrism, socialism, communism, Leninism, Marxism, Mao Tzeism, Trotskyism, Fidelism, fascism, synergism, Nestorianism, vegetarianism.

[Laughter]

Isms, isms, isms; ists, ists, ists.

Sometimes, isms and ists can flow off the tongue like a waterfall. Sometimes they bang and clank like airplane baggage on the roundabout. They can be turned into accusations. They can be hurled as invectives. The velocity of accusations and invectives increases and, in the course of human history, words have frequently turned into bullets. Or self-image wears these words on its metaphoric sleeve like scouting badges, declaring to the world that it is a non-racist, non-sexist, non-ageist, masculinist, pugilist, who practices vegetarianism.

We may be at a social event and meet someone who is a stranger. In an attempt to pinpoint us, they may ask us if we are a nationalist, a federalist, a feminist, a capitalist, a Buddhist. Scarily, we may answer yes or no without knowing what we are being asked.

It took me years to figure out that answering what I thought I was being asked without asking what was really being asked was not useful. This was ages ago, in the beginning of the feminist movement. I had my own definition of what this was. My definition, however it was arrived at, was in the nature of “someone who believed that every being has the right to shelter, food, care, and instruction that would allow them to unfold their full potential”. I now know that I

must have made it up. But I would answer the question, “Are you a feminist?” or “Are you one of *those* feminists?” with a “Yes.” Much to my surprise, the responses to my answer varied. Sometimes I was welcomed into groups that seemed to regard weapons and genitals as the same thing. Sometimes the groups were busy changing “e” to “y” in words so that we wound up with “womyn” and “humyn”. Other linguistically focused groups were busy changing “men” into “persons”, as in “chairperson”. Frighteningly, there were also weird illogical worlds where a “womyn” talked of “peace” and of aborting all male fetuses in the same breath. Charges of being a “ball-breaker”, a “hater of males” and a “cold, calculating bitch” were numerous.

One day, and fortunately, a light went on and I heard myself say, “What are you asking me?” I was saved. Funnily enough, most of those who were asking me if I was a feminist or believed in feminism didn’t have a definition and the attack or the seduction would mysteriously dissipate. I began to notice that we human beings love “isms” and “ists”. Check it out for yourself. Pick up any magazine or newspaper, listen to the news or look at the news. Why do we like them?

In the teisho series, “Questioning the Enigma”, which is a SAKN tape for formal students, Anzan Hoshin roshi says:

*“The flow of reality spills out every where and every when. It flows as the rising and falling moments that are the presencing of this motionless, beginningless and endless moment of experiencing. It is the dirt beneath your fingernails and the wax in your ears. It is the openness of the sky and the complex, interlaced and overlaid currents of air that a bird passes through, rides on, and is carried by in its flight. It is the openness of this moment and it is also the dense overlay of structures of conditioned perception and cognition that self-image rides on, exists on, and propagates itself through.”*

Isms and ists are part of that “*dense overlay of structures of conditioned perception and cognition that self-image rides on, exists on, and propagates itself through.*” We weave them around ourselves to create a structure we can nest within and we believe that is who we are. We use the structure to define and align ourselves and to deflect information that doesn’t fit. This structure can become woven so tightly that it is impenetrable, letting nothing that is not already known through.

Isms and ists, words, words, words. “What’s the harm?” you may ask. From childhood rises an echo of a verse:

*Sticks and stones  
Can break my bones  
But words can never hurt me.*

Well intended, but not really true. Millions of human beings have been murdered because the isms and ists applied to them were the wrong isms and ists. It’s pretty simple. Turn something one way and one person’s terrorism is another’s patriotism; turn it the other way and it’s vice-versa. Isms and ists can be useful, for example in libraries they can help us sort things. Isms and ists, when used by individuals or groups as descriptions of who they think they are and what they believe, can be, and usually are, a red flag to contraction. It’s often quite flagrant and not particularly useful in clarifying anything.

Now, here’s a quote from a recent edition of a well-known Buddhist magazine:

*“There’s a strong streak of anti-essentialism and feminism just as there is in Buddhism.”*

Say what???  
[Laughter]

Not once in the article was there a definition of either “feminism” or more importantly, “Buddhism” even though they used a big “B”. Now, what are we talking about when we use the word “Buddhism”? Are we talking about and understanding the same thing? What comes to mind? Are we talking about a religion? Sometimes. A philosophy? Sometimes. A lifestyle? Some people. A way of life? Could be. Saffron robes? Saffron and maroon robes? Black robes? Brown robes? A little bit of coloured string around a wrist? Socially engaged? Celibate? A big gold statue with blue hair?

We could go on and on but I think you’re getting the picture and starting to understand why here, we tend not to use the “B” word. We may not know, unless we look critically, what it is that is being talked about. To respond to the word, as with other isms with a mere yes or a no is cutting off understanding and being intellectually lazy. It’s like taking a shortcut without knowing where we are going. It also describes an attempt to create a self that is defined by a contraction of belief rather than the openness of the practice of experiencing. **It doesn’t matter what the contraction is called.** Just as what we call a “human being” is still the process of being a human, regardless of being labeled as white or black; Asian or Caucasian; French or English; old or young; Brian, Fatima or Lee; so a contraction is a contraction, whether we call it a phobia, an allergy, a judge, a dictator, a fascist, or a humanist. They’re all stories, sometimes useful, and sometimes not, depending on context.

In our practice, the label doesn’t matter except that when we notice that we are using one or one is present and we are taking it seriously, we are presented with yet another opportunity to open to Openness and we do that by feeling the breath, seeing the seeing, hearing the hearing, sitting up straight, opening attention to this moment. The problem is, however, we have become so convinced of our stories that



we often think they matter and will sometimes fight to the death to defend them. And the stories are convincing because they are supported by social culture. The stories can be about our health, our family, our beliefs, the world. The stories we make up are not true. The fact that they come up as part of a process that can be known is true. Seeing that, and practicing that moment of noticing something about our experience changes, weakens, and eventually wears out our stories and co-incidentally, our ability to believe the stories of others, be they friends, strangers, corporations, or governments. As we learn to notice our experiences and experiencing, we may start to notice interesting and funny, or at least, mildly amusing things.

For example, a major reality hit is that **the movement of attention from open to focused is the same regardless of the content.** The choice to scratch an itch during this Dharma Assembly and during zazen, while differing in duration or in seriousness of consequence is the same in functioning and mechanism as the choice to lash out at someone or to kick the cat. **Learn to recognize that focusing. Learn to recognize that congealing. And learn to mean what you say and say what you mean.** That sounds simple and straightforward, but is it? Think about it. How many times have you answered a question such as, “Are you a capitalist, a socialist, a racist, a sexist, a feminist, a humanist, a socialist or a Buddhist” with an immediate yes or no? Did you really know the question you were being asked? What were you being asked, really?

How many times have you nodded wisely when reading or hearing about pacifism, nationalism, communism, terrorism, constitutionalism, or in the first Dharma Talk, fascism? The next time you come across an ism or an ist, stop, look, ask yourself if you know what is being talked about. If you are asked a question as to whether you are or are not an ism or an ist, stop, look, before you cross that

gap and give an answer. What you mean and what the other person means could be two entirely different things.

I'm not suggesting that you cease using any and all of the isms and ists; quite the opposite, in fact. Enjoy them. Become curious about them. Remember that they are, as any other words are, merely descriptions of experience and not the experience themselves, and as Roshi says, "*part of the dense overlay of structures of conditioned perception and cognition that self-image rides on, exists on, and propagates itself through*". Enjoy them, practice with them, and never, never, never, stake your life on them.

Thank you for listening.

**DAINEN-JI, JANUARY 26<sup>TH</sup>, 2002**

### 3: The Makeup of Coercion

[Three gong strikes]

*“Moment after moment we become what we are.”* That was said by Roshi in *The Wheel of Becoming* teisho series.

Now, before we go any further I would like to point out that no word is the experience it is describing. We have made up every word we use to describe anything. This does not mean, of course, that we cannot use words. That would be silly. Words are tools; the more of them we have and the more capable we are of using them accurately, and one hopes, with a sense of humor, the more capable we are of making clear to ourselves, and anyone else that we are talking to, or any other being that we are talking to, what we are communicating. The only point of saying words out loud is to communicate something. If at any point in the course of this presentation you have a question, please just raise your hand and ask the question because it is important that we all are on the same page of the Sutra, as it were. Self-image is such, the way it operates is such, that it reaches out with its metaphoric little graspers, grabs onto something that is said or done and before we know it, has constructed a whole story, a whole viewpoint, a whole defense for its very existence using what was said. And each time that happens and goes unnoticed it distances us further and further from our own experience. Open experiencing is coerced when that happens, by habitual patterns.

In the *Wheel of Becoming* teisho series, Zen Master Anzan Hoshin also said,

*“We have the tendency to only become what we have been; what we already know, the parts we have rehearsed so tirelessly, standing before the mirror in our dressing robe, applying the paint and the makeup of concept and conversation and coercion.”*

We like to think that we are performing for an audience. We like to think that it is our duty, and even, in some cases,

that our very life and wellbeing depends upon how well we can perform for that audience. Well, we can forget that part because as we start to understand when we do start to look into our own experience, there is no audience. Everyone in that presumed audience is so busy with their own stuff, they're not paying any attention to what we are doing.

So we come to practice and we don't know why, often. We just have this vague sense that we are missing something; that there's got to be more, there must be more to our life, to the life that is living as us, than what we are being presented with day to day. We feel uncomfortable; perhaps we don't quite know why we feel uncomfortable. So we end up sitting in a situation like this on a Saturday morning, with our legs folded, our arms and hands held up against our body, and the instruction to practice any time we notice anything at all about how we are. Anything. In the beginning of our practice we are so caught up in the "thoughts' R' us" and the "feelings' R' us" culture, that those are the only things that we are aware of.

So we spend whatever length of time starting to know a thought as a thought, regardless of the content; starting to know a feeling as bodily sensation with thoughts describing what it is. And we are faced with this impossible situation, in a way, of being able to know through our own experience, that which cannot be described by any external "authority". We are used to having external authorities tell us what we are experiencing. The idea that we can sit and know our own experience does seem to be quite foreign.

Your thumbs are touching. The instruction we give is to feel those thumbs. Can anyone else feel those thumbs for you? No. Can anyone else breathe that breath that you are breathing? No. But be there any sort of an aberration, if for example you start to notice that your breath is "a little too short" as it were, you start to describe and judge the breath, the way that the bodymind works. And before you know it you will have really short breath or really deep breath [Osho makes

a gasping sound] and you can get yourself into a state very quickly about that and...then we can call in the “experts”.

When you start to look into your own experience you find that you have far more choice available around everything and this is what practice does start to uncover. We are used to using the word “coerce” to mean something that is external to us, that is inflicted upon us.

It comes from the Latin, the word “coerce”, meaning “*Coming together to shut up, restrain, keep off or prevent*”. So we are used to hearing that word, and since we humans think we are sort of the be-all and end-all on the planet, we will think of words like that as things that are being done to us by an external agent because we are in the very strange position of not being willing to take responsibility for ourselves on the whole, because we’ve never been taught, usually, that we can only take responsibility for ourselves, for our own experience.

So, “Coerced”: “*to constrain or restrain by the application of superior force or by authority resting on force; to constrain to compliance or obedience by forcible means; to compel or force to do anything; to force into.*” and as I said, we are used to thinking of coercion by an external agent, by an institution, be it church, military, medical, psychiatric, governments, and these are all “authorities” – (when I was researching the Dharma Assembly, I of course went on Google and looked into “coercion” and this is where the word came up, in the context of military, medical, psychiatric, government, church, in the context of institutions) which of course we have constructed, we human beings have constructed. We can look also at the social coercion which can occur; I think it’s time to talk about this a little bit – coercion by media, consumerism, families, and peer groups. So bottom line, we can say that coercion is the overwhelming of the will (of another) by force or threat or fraud.

So what I am asking you to do is to look at, in the course of the Dharma Assembly today, how we coerce ourselves. We coerce our own freedom anytime we let a pattern that has been previously established, previously unquestioned, run on

its own. So in the course of our practice, we start to see the many ways that we coerce our own freedom by following patterns that we have put into the vocabulary as being our personality, as being how we have to be to just get along in the world. Practice asks us to, demands us to, actually, notice those things. The whole purpose of the Lineage, which we chanted this morning, has been to help us see the patterns that are established in bodymind that limit who we are, that limit our freedom to actualize who we really are in this moment and this moment and this moment.

So we start small-small, as they say in West Africa, we start small-small by looking into our experience and learning to recognize a thought. By recognizing a thought and using that as a cue to feel the breath rising and falling, moving the body in and out, to straighten the posture, to open the eye gaze, we see over time that any thought whatsoever, any story, will lose its power over us because we are using the very things that can enslave us to open to the freedom of this moment of experiencing. And this can be done regardless of the content that we carry around with us. Any content is basically just more of the same. It's a pattern that has been embodied, it has been running for a long time, and if we don't question into it, it will become the thing that motivates us, as it were, that coerces us, that propels us towards action without question. And with coercion, using the definitions that are in play today, there's talk of compelling someone to perform an action or be harmed in some way. We do that all the time when we do not know the actual nature of our experiencing.

We take our stories to be more true than the rest of what we are experiencing. We fall into states, and they can be triggered by anything, and we use that state as a way of acting in this moment. So when we take that apart it really is pretty silly. There is something that we learnt or the bodymind learnt. We, as the knowing of experiencing, were never consulted as to whether that was useful or not. But that pattern came into being and it became a definer of how we are. So then, how

we would seek relief from that pattern, if we chose to seek relief from the consequences, actually, of the pattern, depends very much upon the structures we've encountered in the course of our life.

We are in a culture right now where the reality of our experience as a human is being coerced as well. We coerce it ourselves; we coerce it through media, through not knowing what we are doing when we are actually engaging in any activity whatsoever.

The Shuso and I were at a high school giving an introduction to basic mindfulness practice the other night and someone made the statement that television is evil. So we looked into that a little bit because there are many things interesting that are going on in media right now. One of them is these reality shows. I'm sure you've all come across a reality show, so to speak, where a multitude of cameras and production crews follow along as a couple, say, get together and go out on a date. Now, it's only within the last few days, actually, that there has been writing, media critics have written about these reality shows and pointed out what should be obvious; anything that is watched in such a way and recorded in such a way has nothing to do with the "reality" of "the date". We have a totally fabricated situation.

So, is television evil? No, of course not, it's plastic and it's metal and it's programming and it is a little dot going across a screen. Are movies evil? No, same thing. Moving pictures don't even move. Right off the top we have a fundamental misunderstanding of what's going on. There's no such thing as a "moving picture" when you go to the moving pictures. They are still frames that travel at a certain speed in front of light. But we like to think that the characters are up there and it's moving. So it behooves us human beings to look into, over and over again, the things that we have created, and that does include our moment to moment experiencing right now. Because the personality that we like to carry around and use to define who we are, is coerced because the stronger patterns

will overcome something that is new if left unquestioned. And until we are told that no pattern is what we are, that it is just something going on in our experiencing and can be known and can be practiced, it will just bulldoze over everything else. Why? Because it's been at it longer, it's not been questioned, in fact it's probably been supported in many ways by institutions that are around us.

So, any pattern that is unquestioned coerces your experience. Another question that can come up: Do you have the right to sell yourself into slavery, slavery to your own patterns? Well, as long as you are in the Monastery, and remember you came here voluntarily. No one went out on the street and dragged you in. So that act of entering into practice, entering through the Gates of Practice, does indicate that you are not content with what was, I think, described quite nicely, in *the Matrix*, as the “splinter in the brain” that brought you to practice.

So practice has, for 2600 years, presented an opportunity to look into your own experience moment to moment and to do something anytime you notice a focusing on any aspect of that experience. Because you only notice the focusing after it has started to open. When we are focused on something we don't notice that that is what is going on. Why? Because we are consumed by it. We have been wrapped up, as it were, chained by that focusing. So then it [Osho snaps fingers] starts to open and that's the point when we see it; that's the moment to practice because you are going from a smaller to a larger in your experiencing and practice is always practicing the larger.

Everything in the monastery, everything in the environment of practice, is here for only one reason and that is to show you over and over and over again, the many ways in which you narrow your own experience, the many ways in which you choke yourself. Really, yes, it's like this [Osho puts her hands on her throat and chokes herself]. We get like this and we are here to say that you don't have to do that [Releases hands]. And we go “Ohhh” [sigh of relief].

[Laughter]



The Vow we chanted this morning, *the Vow of Samantabhadra*, talked about “compression”. A fact about being in a bodymind is that there is energy and because we are alive it’s a certain kind of energy. After we’re dead, if we are left alone, there will be another kind of energy, and that’s the energy of decay. I’m talking about reality here; I am not talking about something “up there” or another sort of “mystical experience”, I am talking about the magic of reality. The bodymind drops, energy transforms itself into little shining beings and gasses and things like that. We are talking about the energy of being alive.

We are in a situation. We enter into the monastery for the first time, let’s say, and we don’t know what to do. We bring with us all these little leeches of our previous experience which, on the whole, has told us that we have to know what to do in every situation, that if we don’t know what to do in every situation there’s something wrong with us or we will be perceived to be a certain way, and self-image does not want to be perceived to be any way other than perfect. It comes to a situation where it can learn things, but often it will try and pretend that it should know what it’s going to learn beforehand. Self-image brings into every situation everything that has ever been learnt to try and create a solid, an armoured self. In the environment of practice, over and over, this becomes very evident; this tendency to do that becomes very evident. We can have a perfectly open moment of experiencing and something may happen that we are not expecting. Then self-image will start to look around with shifty eyes and start to look inward with shifty eyes, start to make stories about how it thinks it should be, how it thinks this situation should be, and how it thinks the other people in that situation should be. And I think we have all experienced that, maybe today, already. This is wonderful because if we are alive, this is what is going to present itself in the atmosphere of practice, in the environment of practice.

All of our patterns will present themselves and that's wonderful because that is an opportunity to practice. You do that by feeling the breath, sitting up straight, opening the peripheral vision and that, over time, becomes embodied. Each moment is allowed, then, to present itself as it is, un-coerced by our ideas about how it should be.

Do you have any questions at this point, about anything?

[Student ]: Osho, you say that self-image wants to believe continuously that it is perfect. What about the times that self-image wants to believe that it's worthless, worth nothing?

[Osho]: Content. That's just content, because if it's going to be worthless, it's going to be **the** most worthless, ever, right? Perfectly worthless. Self-image is the phrase that is used to describe any view whatsoever about how we are and how the world is. That's how we use it in the context of this practice.

Now, this presents interesting possibilities, and many little roads to go down, that will get us back to the same place, which is, "*no experience is the words that we use to describe it.*" But we use words. There are a lot of self-esteem books and courses and so on saying that we should have a "good one" and the reason why we don't have a "good one" is because we have a "bad one" and so then we have to do things with the "bad one" to bring it up so that it's the "good one" and then we can do whatever it is that we need to do.

So, content is not the point with practice. It is noticing the compression or the contraction that "good" or "bad" has and the contraction can be the same, of the same intensity, for either. Does that answer your question?

[Student]: Yes, thank you.

[Osho]: You're welcome. Anything else about anything?

[Student]: I have a question and it comes up all the time and it is related to the noticing...not the content, but the contraction. How do we know contraction please?

[Osho]: Okay. When something happens that we are not expecting or when a situation occurs that we are not expecting, we will notice that the bodymind goes “whoa”, it actually contracts like this, okay? We may be in the monastery. We may not know what to do in a situation. We can start to feel that energy of not knowing, the energy of the thought of not knowing. The converse side of that, of course, is that we should know and that itself expresses itself as a movement in the body that is towards being smaller. We, as it were, become smaller. A self is on its way to being created, a being is being created that, really depending upon its story, shouldn't be here because it doesn't know what to do. Or it places blame; “They shouldn't be this way because can't they see that ‘I’ am really trying to do this thing properly?” So any movements like that, which move to create a “self”, and with that, inherently, “other”, have a palpable quality to them. We feel them. We feel smaller on the whole.

A way I've found of remembering it quite easily is to make a fist. That's contraction. [Osho lets hand fall open] This is open. This can do anything. [Osho closes hand into a fist] This can't do anything, except maybe do this [makes punching gesture] or hit the floor. That's it. Extreme way, but it can help to describe it. It is something you feel.

[Student ]: I had a question about the atmosphere of the monastery being designed so that there are cues to remind you to be open rather than closed. Is it a good idea to try to do that in your home or work environment, to have some subtle cues in the environment to remind you?

[Osho]: Sure.

[Student]: Obviously you can't be bowing through the door at work.

[Osho]: But you can always stop. We can take a second when we are moving throughout our day-to-day experience, day-to-day environments, and stop at a door. Some people have done things like put little rock gardens, or a few rocks, on their desks. The bodymind sees it and it is a reminder that there is more going on than that particular context, as you were saying, the context of a work environment. That can be very limited. It is very limited. It's institutionalized. Because we are working in that environment, we have very good reasons for being there, say, a paycheck. That's a good thing. That's useful. It's pointless to take our energy and try to change that whole environment. But as you pointed out, having a reminder of the potential you have of openness, of open experience, is definitely a good thing.

Now, you've said that the atmosphere of the monastery is to show you openness, as it were, to remind you to be open. That's one way of saying it. Another way of saying it is that everything in the monastery is a tool to show you when contraction is present and to show you how to open it. Humans being the way we are, and the way we latch on to words, can present problems. "Openness" has been misunderstood. There are whole movements towards "openness" that have ended up with people who don't even know each other hugging each other for no reason whatsoever and...

[Laughter]

...regurgitating their horrible personal stories, one view of their horrible personal stories. That's not openness, that's just bad manners.

[Laughter]

We want to see how this happens in our own experience moment to moment. And once we've seen that pattern, any

pattern, for what it is, as a pattern, regardless of the content (and again “pattern” is just a word as is contraction to describe an experience), practice. When we notice the experience, then we can feel the breath, open the eye gaze, sit up straight. That’s the whole thing. That’s what has been taught for 2600 years. That’s the bottom line. Saying that no contraction can define you is a way of saying; nothing that is known can describe Knowing in itself. And that includes a sense of self. Any time that comes up, that’s the point where you practice.

Is there anything else?

[Student]: When we are sitting, are we either practicing opening, or if we are not doing that then by definition, what you are saying, are we suffering from a contraction? Does it have to be one or the other?

[Osho]: It’s not either/or like that, not at all. Again, as I said, none of the words are what the experience is. So when we are sitting and we are lost in whatever contraction when we are coerced, when open experiencing is coerced, well we are in the environment of practice so by definition we are practicing, is one way of looking at it. We have made ourselves available to looking into how our experiencing is. So a practice advisor or a Dharma Teacher might come around and adjust our posture and at that point of the postural adjustment everything can change. It shifts. No matter how hard we may struggle to get back into whatever story, we recognize that we have to struggle to get back into it. That lets us know that in fact there is a choice available that we didn’t know that we had because we have on the whole defined ourselves by the patterns of contraction.

Does that answer your question?

[Student]: It’s getting there.

[Laughter]

[Student]: Does it mean that it's as hard to get out of the box as it is to get into the box?

[Osho]: What box?

[Student]: It's as hard to get out of being coerced, and then when we suddenly see it, it's as hard to get back...

[Osho]: No, I wouldn't say that. No, because what you are trying to do there is to come up with a formula.

[Student]: That's probably what I am trying to do.

[Laughter]

[Osho]: The formula is this: the longer you put this [Osho slaps her backside] on this [slaps zafu], the more patterns will open up and when patterns open, openness is embodied because bodymind learns. The bodymind loves sitting. It's very happy sitting. Self-image, the views we have about what we are doing, 'on the whole' doesn't like it at all. That's why we get the natterings and whisperings and yellings that come up during a sitting round, about what we should be doing or how we would be better off if we just got up and left and why doesn't that person shut-the-hrmmph-up.

But once the contractions are opened over and over again, that pattern of contraction, that pattern of coercion, is worn out. When that's worn out entirely, then you just are this moment of experiencing; you are Awareness in Itself. *"Awareness is the only condition. All that is arises as the display of Awareness."* You are learning to see that.

*DAINEN-JI, JANUARY 25TH, 2003*

**The Point of Wisdom:**  
**Minding Your Own Bodymind**  
**Dharma Talk Presented by Ven. Shikai Zuiko osho**

“The Point of Wisdom: Minding your Own Bodymind.” This is what has been talked about for nearly 2600 hundred years, since Gautama Siddhartha sat down after having tried all sorts of – Crazy? Perhaps. Dubious? Perhaps.– practices, to find out what's really going on. What is this? What is this thing we call a human being? What is this bodymind? What's going on?

That same question is still being asked and it does seem to be being asked more and more often. Each one of you asked that question at some point in your lives and look where you ended up – on a Saturday morning. Nice warm autumn day and here you are indoors, sitting, facing a white wall with your eyes open. What is the point of this? The point of this is to afford yourselves the opportunity to look into the actual process of the bodymind, the actual process of perception and cognition in your own bodymind, not someone else's, your own.

We do live at a time when the spoken word and the written word seem to have taken precedence over any other form of experience or expression. We fall for those written or spoken explanations and we believe the limitations that are often expressed by them. No word is the experience of which it is speaking. Experience can only be experienced. At this point let me say I am not saying that words are not useful. I'm certainly not saying that they are not valuable and I am not saying that they are not fun. In fact, they are all of those things especially when we look into what is actually being spoken of; especially when we question into what's meant when we are asked questions. Words are a small part of our experience in each moment, actually, but we consider them to be so important that we will ignore 97 percent of the other things that we are expe-

riencing and feed all of our attention into a word or a phrase or a thought expressed in words and phrases, or in colours and sounds, images.

This practice teaches us to notice what's going on right "BANG!" [Osho strikes shippei on the floor] now. There were a myriad of dharmas or moments of experience that expressed themselves for you as the Knowing, to notice when that sound occurred. All you, as Knowing, need do is learn to notice them. So this practice is looking into that process of perception and cognition and you do that by feeling the breath moving the bones in and out. That means you are alive and you still have a chance to Wake Up from the dream that we often call our life. Because when we believe only the stories we tell ourselves about our life, we are robbing ourselves. And this does get expressed all over the place all the time. People will seek out help from almost anything because they feel something's missing in their life. They feel there is a hole and often if we are looking at someone who is saying there's a hole in their life they will actually point to their abdomen or have their hands on their abdomen or around the area of the heart. They say, "I feel so empty. There's no meaning. I want to have meaning, I want things to be meaningful. I want this void to be filled." So of course we get very busy running after many, many, many things to try to fill that void.

We run after dresses and cars and land and guns and drugs and alcohol and cross-word puzzles. We run after television programs and movies and friends that we gobble up like some strange cannibal, to try and fill something that really doesn't exist. This void does not exist. It is caused by our obsessive feeding of attention into one or two areas of our life in each moment. That tends to be thoughts and feelings which it would seem, almost a consensus, are the most important things.

When we use the noticing of thoughts and feelings to notice the rest of what's going on; the heart beating; blood



coursing through the bodymind; hair growing on our head; random signals from various locations which we often will tend to interpret as something wrong [we do have this tendency to pay attention to the flesh and the bones only when we think there's something wrong]. We do what we do with everything else and objectify the bodymind rather than simply learning to experience it fully in this moment.

Because of the nature of the material that I'm presenting, that you are noticing and practicing with today, we know that actually we have established a certain maturity in our practice. If we were to talk at an Introductory Workshop about the skeleton, about feeling the “sitz” bones and recognizing we can know them and with a thought make them press down into the cushion so that as we breathe, the lungs inflate and the spine lifts up and the head rebalances and the eyes open so that peripheral vision is present; If we were to present that and only that at an Introductory Workshop it wouldn't be long before this would be understood to be another bodymind practice, another way of “working with the body”. This is, of course, not what it is. It is a way of helping us know more clearly the actual nature of our experiencing in each moment.

The point of wisdom is balance point. Balance point is the fine, delicate balance of the spine, the skull, the ribcage, the pelvis, on your cushion. If we were to take that instruction about how to establish and recognize balance point and make rules out of it then people would tend to sit rigidly, forcing themselves, using muscles to sit upright. And that is a stance and we wouldn't recognize it as such. We would think that we were doing “the right thing”. In our practice we mature and we start to understand that when we talk about this moment it's already the past moment. This moment is experienced before any words about it. We start to understand through our own experience that we need not label things for them to be happening. In fact, the experience comes first and then the label about it. And

this has been the case since the beginning of human beings. Experience always comes first. Language was developed to talk about experience.

The bodymind is such a nested system of knowings and causes and effects that when we even think about a word, it produces an effect in the bodymind. Thinking about something over and over again embeds that particular response, whatever it may be, in the bodymind. We all have had innumerable experiences of that. It can be called obsession or it could just be called “having a bad day”, but the bodymind itself does not have the capacity to discriminate and decide whether something that it is doing is useful or not. You do. You, as the Knowing, as Experiencing, as Awareness, have that capacity. And you are developing it each time you remember to feel the breath, feel those “sitz” bones, feel the spine, balance the skull so that the chin is moving a bit towards the neck so that the back of the head is rising up, so that the top of the head is flat and parallel to the ceiling.

Each moment of practicing anapanasatti, mindfulness of breath and body, is helping the bodymind release old patterns of attention. In the *Satipatthana sutta*, the *Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness*, people who had listened to Gautama Siddhartha speak, or who knew people who had, wrote down – some say maybe 200 to 300 years after it was actually spoken – what was said to have been said by the Buddha. It’s wonderful that we have such things in existence we can use. Just as the Lineage is there as an active reminder that we have not popped this practice out of nowhere, that in fact men and women just like us have done this very practice of mindful sitting for 2600 years, so the written words can be useful. However, when you are listening to them, when you are reading those written words, feel the breath, sit up straight, open the eye gaze, actually practice what is being spoken of and recognize that people who wrote down these things were human beings just like you and me. They did things exactly like you and I, which means

that they have taken things out of context, they have believed them rather than actually doing them. So, often, distortion occurs. And in the sutta, it begins, of course, with the “*Evam Me Suttam, Thus Have I Heard: Once the Generous One was dwelling*” ... So immediately we have a problem – “*the Generous One*” – those of us who have a predilection for deifying things will do it immediately. “The Generous One is up there, somewhere, looking at me, looking out for me so I'll just have to listen to what's being said, memorize it, believe it, and everything will be okay.” Not true.

They are saying something to the effect that “You know I heard this guy. Or I actually didn't hear him but my great-grandfather knew someone who'd heard this guy and he said something like, ‘You know you can Wake Up. There'll be an end to all of this suffering’”.

And so you say, “Well, yeah? How?”

“Well you come with me and we'll listen to someone who'll tell us all about it.”

And then we get told things like:

*“Breathing in, one is mindful; breathing out, one is mindful. Breathing out a long breath, one understands, ‘I breathe out a long breath.’ Breathing in a long breath, one understands, ‘I breathe in a long breath.’ Breathing out a short breath, one understands, ‘I breathe out a short breath.’ Breathing in a short breath, one understands, ‘I breathe in a short breath.’”*

So before we know it, there are groups of people who are going, [Osho makes the sound of someone inhaling heavily] “I am breathing in a long breath.” [Osho makes the sound of someone exhaling heavily] “I am breathing out a long breath.” And it's not long before we have counting the breath, because if something can be misunderstood, we will misunderstand it.

So, rather than just saying, “So this is what's going on:

Yes, we are breathing and we can know it”, we human beings want to nail it down.

We say, “Yes, but what am I supposed to **do**?” We say, “Well, just notice the breath. That's all, just notice it.”

“Yeah, but how many times a minute am I supposed to notice it?”

We want prescriptions for everything.

Just notice it and feel your bones, open your eyes, notice the peripheral vision. And now you notice the next thing. So let's say the next thing is a thought about how what these people really need to do is come up with better directions as to how to do this and we feed attention into it; then something happens, perhaps someone comes along and adjusts our posture and we go “Oh!”, the bodymind itself releases the breath at that point. We sit up straight and we open the eye gaze and that thought is gone. In order to maintain thoughts, we need to compromise the integrity of balance point; we need to compromise the integrity of the bodymind in this moment. By minding the bodymind, by noticing what's going on, what has happened, that we have woken up from that thought to the larger space and remembering to notice the breath [Osho makes the sound of someone inhaling strongly] to allow the bodymind to breathe and to balance the head, we have practiced mindfulness of the bodymind in that moment. We've released the capacities of the bodymind that were caught up in propagating a thought that could be poisonous because if we've been in the habit of propagating critical thoughts, say, about ourselves, or about others and so on and so on, they literally do result in – and nobody knows how – the byproducts of metabolism, to lots of atoms being released that set into motion all sorts of previous patterns which contract the bodymind down and we become a “self” with these certain habits and patterns and tendencies that obstruct us [And we had demonstrations of that during the chanting of the *Daishin Dharani*]. Obstructions

are not useful, they're not necessary and they are not inherent to the bodymind.

An obstruction is a Dharma Gate; it's a moment of experience that we notice and when we notice it and practice it, it ceases to be an obstruction. It opens. And our language may be that we "open around it" because language can be useful, but language will be understood in different ways by different people at different times, so it is important for us to keep things fresh and to have as many different ways of talking about something as is possible.

Back to the sutta. In the sutta there is discussion of images of the body.

*"And moreover, monks, upward from the soles of their feet and downwards from the hair on the crown of the head, one observes the body covered with skin and filled with impurities."*

"Gag." [Osho laughs]. It's not that they're impurities really. We just have what the bodymind does. That's it. As Roshi has said in *Flowers and Worms*", we are this 25 foot worm coiled up within a bony structure with teeth at one end and an aperture at the other end for letting out the only thing that we produce as human beings.

*"Within the body there are hairs on the head, hair on the body, nails, skin, teeth, flesh, muscle, bone, marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs, bowels, intestines, stomach, excrement, bile, phlegm, mucous, sinovic fluid, and urine. If a double-mouthed sack filled with various grains like paddy, hill rice, kidney beans, masa beans, sesame and husked rice were to be opened by somebody, with his eyes, he would discern: this is paddy, this is hill rice, these are kidney beans, these are masa beans, this is sesame and these are grains of husked rice."*

And that's quite colourful but again, it can just fall into legend, something that we just memorize and go "Oh yeah" [Osho makes several "tsk" sounds]. Something incredibly interesting, to me, was when I realized that we do have very little knowledge of the reality of the bodymind. In fact, these people who were practicing, these monks, these home leavers who were practicing with Gautama Siddhartha, had more actual knowledge of what's "inside" than we do. Why would that be? Because they practiced in charnal grounds. They practiced where the bodies were. They did that in order to mature their practice. This presents a very interesting point of divergence because we could look at it and judge it one way as being just something really awful that you have to push yourself, push your way through, or we could recognize that this probably meant that these people had a much better sense of the skeleton than we do. If we ever see a skeleton today it most likely will be because we are in a medical practitioner's office or a museum. We have the capacity to divorce ourselves from the reality of our own bones and body entirely. It is as if this is something else. As if it has nothing whatsoever to do with us. If we break a bone, that is a different matter. We'll run to the bone setter who can fix that for us. But actually integrating the information that this is what we are, that we are this bony structure that the old guys observed as bodies rotted.

When I was a little girl we went to get a new pair of shoes once a year, about this time of year. We would go to a shoe store where they had a "fluoroscope". I think that's what they called it. One got to stand in it, put the feet into two little openings and look down and there were your bones, the bones of your feet, and you could see the outline of the shoe that you were buying to see whether it fit. We are not allowed to have those anymore in shoe stores because those X-rays were deemed to be

dangerous, but it was pretty interesting. We'd think, "Gee, bones. I've got these bones; there are 26 of them in each foot".

Most often we will ignore the reality of that skeleton entirely.

*"And monks, see the body, abandoned in the burning ground, a skeleton bloody and fleshless, tied together with tendon and sinews, and remember that, 'This body is also of that nature; it will come to this, it cannot avoid this.'*

*"And monks, see the body abandoned in the charnel ground, its bones not bound together but scattered in all directions, here the bones of the hand, there the bones of the foot, here the shin bone, the thigh bone, the hip bone, the spine and the skull, and recollect that, 'This body is also of that nature; it will come to this, it cannot avoid this.'"*

Well, inside each and every one of us there is a skeleton just waiting to get out. Early on in my practice when I was sitting in the middle of this bloody hell called practice with everything hurting and not able to pay much attention to anything else other than how much I hated this, I was called up for dokusan and I dragged myself in a foul, foul, foul state, into the dokusan room. After doing the bows and so on, Roshi says to me, "*What is it that drags this corpse upstairs?*" Damn.

As long as you are breathing you are not a corpse. As long as you are noticing the breath you have an opportunity to practice the bones just as people in this Lineage have been doing since the beginning. Dogen's Lineage of Zen recognized that practice was the practice of this body in this moment. This is what Dogen zenji taught. In *Shinjin Gakudo* he speaks of practicing the whole bodymind in this whole moment. And that's all there is to it. It does sound incredibly simple, but we do

become obstructed because of forgetting that the patterns and habits and tendencies are not who we are. We are the knowing of the bones, the marrow, the thoughts, the feelings. By using the structure of the skeleton to return again and again to balance point when we have gone away from it by feeding attention into our thoughts about what's going on, we are allowing the bodymind to be itself, to do what it does best, which is be the bodymind and take care of business.

The bones are not dry things. They're very flexible. The living bones are very flexible, very active, very strong; as strong as steel but as flexible as aluminum. There're about 206 bones in each one of us. The precise number may vary from person to person. Our main concern when we are sitting zazen is what's called the "axial column", which is the central bones: the pelvis, the vertebrae, the ribs and skull. The other bits, when we are sitting, the arms and legs, can be put into position with the mudra, the hands resting in the Dharmadhatu mudra allows us the opportunity to feel the breath moving the body in and out. Each time we feel that – breathe in, breathe the body up, allow the lungs to expand like balloons. This allows the spine to stretch out and the knees to drop down and open. Over time this will happen. When you move the bodymind at the end of the sitting round, forget about the soft tissue; forget about the thoughts you are having about the soft tissue. Use them to feel the breath and the bones and to allow experiencing to open, to allow knowing to open to what it really is. Move slowly with as much intelligence as you can, allow yourself to notice that the bones have a lot of information. They're very busy even as we are sitting here with me talking on and on. They're busy. They're producing red blood cells and white blood cells. They are flowing with information. They can be reshaped, realigned while they are alive.



During this Dharma Assembly there will be more postural alignment, and with this practice, anything raises opportunities for practice. Postural alignment is not criticism of how you were. None of the instruction in practice is criticism, but hot-damn, boy, we certainly will take it to be that often [and again I am speaking only from my own experience]. When that comes up, say a tendency to be reactive, that's the bodymind being reactive; that's the bodymind doing what it thinks it's supposed to do because it's done it before. It is not you. You are the Knowing. So when you notice anything like that, feel the breath [Osho audibly inhales], feel the bones. Use it to open up beyond that obstruction.

The point of wisdom, this moment, is available to you all of the time. All you need to do is notice it. And so far you are doing everything right. You are here. You have that opportunity. You've overcome all sorts of obstructions since you began to practice.

During Dharma Assemblies, part of the form is that there is only functional talking, which means that only if something needs to be communicated about something that needs to be done or where something may be, do we talk. There's no reading. But during this Dharma Assembly, please have a look at Bob. Bob is standing on top of the refrigerator in the Dining Hall. Bob is that little plastic skeleton. Please don't flock there, but if you have a moment and you are in the vicinity, have a look at Bob. And after the Dharma Assembly, spend some time with bones, wherever you can find them, to get a sense of what they're really like, what the alignment is like. And during the course of the rest of the day, in every moment you will have opportunity to practice point of wisdom with the whole bodymind by minding your own bodymind, returning to balance point as it becomes clearer and clearer as you notice that point where the torso does become weightless for a moment as things

are aligned. In order to get into anything, any state, any feeling bad, any feeling good, any pain, you have to compromise the integrity of that balance point.

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

Thank you for listening.

**DAINEN-JI, SEPTEMBER 27, 2003**

# The Bridge

Dharma Talk by Ven. Shikai Zuiko osho

If you already are where you need to be, do you need a bridge? If there is nowhere to go, do you need a bridge? Have there been little bridges built across your synaptic gaps to make things faster? When we see the word “bridge” or think about bridges over which we have traveled or even card games we have played, images may spring to mind in the form of pictures or sounds or sensations in the bodymind. Now, of course, when that happens you all know what to do. Any moment of experience that arises which you know, of which there is a moment of knowing, is the opportunity to practice presenting itself freely and for no reason whatsoever. It is presenting itself for you to practice or for Knowing, which is what you really are, to practice that moment of noticing. And it's so simple! Feel the breath moving the arches of the ribs in and out. Feel the architecture of the bones and allow the bodymind to align and straighten itself. Feel the neck straighten and balance the skull. Open to peripheral vision. You have practiced that moment. As you do that over and over and over again, practice becomes embodied. That means that many, indeed all – over time – the patterns that have been set in place in the bodymind are opened and you find that you are where you always were, which is in this moment and you have everything you need to Wake Up entirely, to Wake Up past all of your beliefs and stories about who you are and how the world is so that the bodymind is living the experience of this moment and you know that that is what you are doing. You know that this moment is being responded to skillfully in appropriate ways.

When the poster for this Dharma Assembly went up on the bulletin board there was a flurry of interest and it was about the word “bridge”. Now I didn't explore it with people who asked what did it mean, but I surely got a sense

that we were looking for shortcuts [laughter from students], a way of getting from “here” to “there” faster and safely.

Well, that’s not what I meant [More laughter].

It actually started off because I was thinking about, and experiencing from students, the many stories that self-image spins. Self-image is not an “evil twin”, not the “dark side”, not some sort of “assassin” to our wellbeing and hopes and dreams. “Self-image” is two words with a little line in between, used in this practice to describe all of the stories and views we have about how we are and how the world is. These views are usually wrong, to a greater or lesser degree.

One of the very common ones that I experienced myself, and please bear in mind that I am not talking about any one student, I am talking about my own experience of things. My experience may be remarkable, or maybe not so remarkable, maybe totally unremarkable because that is how things are, only in how it is reflective of your own experience. Although we come in different heights and widths and smells and inclinations and hairdo’s and foot size, the process of being a human being is the same and it has been the same for all human beings since the beginning of human beings, whenever that might have been, but that is a whole different story. So with the bridge, we want shortcuts.

We remember, or I remember, many, many times telling myself that I would never survive this round of zazen. Never. “I am going to die.” In fact, one time I did manage to get myself into such a state, and bear in mind that this was early on, this was in 1988 and I think it was the first sesshin that I ever did. And at that sesshin, Roshi, “Sensei” at the time, was the leader of the sitting, the Teacher, the jikido, the tenzo, and he gave dokusan down in the basement – the dank, dark, insect ridden basement at Daijozan. The stairway was so steep it was like going into a deep, black pit. One day during that particular sesshin, Roshi was in the kitchen cooking and I came staggering out blind with pain. I had gotten myself into such a contracted situation that I could barely manage

to gasp out to him “I need to go to the hospital” [laughter from students]. But when he reminded me what we were doing there I recognized that perhaps I was being a little extreme. But there can come points in our practice when we are sitting zazen, when we think that we are not going to be able to stand up at the end of the sitting round. And so I thought, “Well if you believe that, have I got a bridge for you.” When I mentioned to Roshi that I thought it would be kind of neat to talk about self-image and its lies as an Oil Can Harry kind of super-duper salesman who apparently extracted money from many people – for example by selling them the Brooklyn Bridge – Roshi said, “*People won't know what that means.*” I realized that he was right, absolutely right, that right now and into the future, that may not be something that is familiar to people. So it had to be dropped. But the bridge kept haunting me because it is such a lovely word and it evokes many things: it evokes the arching of beautiful bridges over large rivers, large bodies of water, soaring, somewhat akin to the soaring towers that were built, the soaring steeples that were built which were apparently built because of a yearning after a heavenly experiencing, a yearning after that which could never be attained unless we handed ourselves and all of our possessions over to some middleman. But a bridge is more utilitarian than that.

Big bridges arch gracefully over to the other side. The problem, and I think it is a major problem with beautiful bridges, is that, we may be driving along in our car, we look out the window and we see ahead of us the bridge that is going to take us somewhere. We might think about how beautiful the surroundings are going to look from that bridge, what a gorgeous view we will have. And a sense of anticipation builds up. Then we get on the bridge, the car is on the bridge [Osho imitates the sound of tires on metal struts], the wheels vibrate. We look out the window and see vast expanses of cement rushing by at whatever the speed of the car is. It's just another damned road.

We can get excited in practice about the idea of a shortcut and we forget over and over again that we don't need a shortcut because we are not going anywhere. Everything that you need is right here, right now, including instruction. Everything. There is no other side to get to. It's not surprising that we have become confused because over the centuries there has been a lot of talk generated by various and sundry versions of self-image about "bridges to" the lower world, the upper world, the world of light. And it seems that always with these things there is a toll keeper and you will get the information when you have offered whatever is appropriate and that varies from tobacco to vast amounts of gold, again to that toll keeper, to the middleman (and I don't mean that as a totally male thing, not at all. But we could say, what could we say...person? But let's not get into that).

The bridge, the idea of the bridge seems to be one that is incredibly appealing for us because we want to save time and we want to get there faster. With practice we know because we are constantly told, there is nowhere to go. You do not need a bridge. You might need a guide. You need instruction. You need a Teacher. But you don't need a shortcut and there isn't one. And you have to do everything. Only you can enter into this moment fully and completely and all you need to do is notice what's going on in your own experiencing. When any experience whatsoever presents itself, feel the breath moving the bodymind in and out; feel the breath as air around the bodymind; feel the architecture of the bodymind; allow it to align itself; open the peripheral vision. That is all you need to do.

On the poster for the Dharma Assembly there is a graphic. It was executed as a hanging scroll by Hakuin, one of the Dharma Ancestors and it was done in the 1760s. It's rectangular, about five times as wide as it is high, and it shows what appears to be a bridge executed with a single brush stroke. In the background in the right-hand side, there

are mountains and on that ink stroke are two figures, two human figures with sticks. It's entitled "Blind Man on a Long Bridge" and it is inscribed on the left, "*In both spiritual training and dealing with the world, keep in mind a blind man crossing a dangerous bridge.*"

"Blind Man on a Long Bridge" was found on Google and they describe it as "*an elegantly composed depiction of two blind men feeling their way across a log bridge*" and the inscription says in this one, "*Caring for health and living life are like the blind man's round, long bridge. A mind that can cross over is the best guide.*" The reference to the blind echoes a common Zen theme: a person without knowledge of Buddhism is as confused as a blind man with a lantern. That means...however it was put originally by Hakuin: pay attention. Pay attention to what is happening right now. We all have experience of thinking about something happening and having it happen. We may be walking in *kinhin* attending quite openly to this step, the feeling in the hips, the feeling in the spine, the sensations of the hands touching each other in the *mudra*, and then we think "I'm doing really well at this" and sometimes at that point we trip ourselves up because attention has become narrowed and focused on that "self", that little knot in space, that contraction of a "me" who is doing something well.

When you notice that sense of a "me", that contraction, recognize it as being a moment of experience, nothing more, nothing less, no more significant than the feeling of the foot on the floor; no more significant than the feeling of the hair growing on your head; no more significant than a drop of sweat running down your side. It is a moment of experience that has been noticed. So feel the breath, sit up straight, open the eye gaze. Practice **that** moment so that **this** moment and **this** moment and **this** moment are embodied, until you are the activity of this moment.

We want to bridge things. We want to get "there" faster, wherever "there" may be. There is a book publishing com-

pany which, I must say, brought a great deal of joy to my childhood because what that book publishing company did, was take great works and abridge them so that we could digest them more easily. My father would bring home boxes of these books which he picked up at auctions and sales and so forth and the excitement of opening a box and to see all of these different coloured bindings, to smell that kind of mildewy, cottagy, old book smell, was wonderful. Here were some or at least a little bit of what the author had written, which raises questions, of course, about writing, about works that express themselves with words on paper. When we are reading the abridged version, why are we doing that? Now it could be, as in the case mentioned, that was what was there and as a child I would read anything. Even if I had read it before and there was nothing else to read I would read it over again. But when we abridge works, what do we think we're doing? Are we reading what the author wrote? No. Are we reading the essence of what the author wrote? No. We are reading little bits and pieces so that we can have a general idea so that we can say "Oh, I read that." Or we could pass the exam. So if there were a promise that there would be a bridge for you to get "there" faster, beware of it just as the blind men on the round log bridge have to be careful, feeling as the foot steps forward, what's going on, allowing through that moment of experiencing the step, the pressures on the foot, the senses responding to what's happening in that moment, and make the next step. That can only be done from fully experiencing and fully exploring this moment and this is what you are learning to do with practice.

There can be no shortcuts. Again, there is nowhere to go. This is it and you have everything that you need to open fully and completely to who you really are, before and prior to, all of the stories and patterns that have become engraved, as it were, or patterned into the bodymind. You are not the bodymind because the bodymind is how we know experi-



encing, it is what we experience **with**. Multiplicity or as Roshi said in a recent teisho series “*the thousands of myriads*” of details can be known and each one of them can be used by you to open fully to this moment.

When students come here to practice, it is only to be expected that we bring with us our usual view of how the world is and how we are because that is what we’ve learned, that’s what we’ve been taught. Now, I bet everybody in this room (but of course I am not a bettor, I am a monk, I don’t bet)...but if I were a betting monk... I would bet that everybody in this room has had many moments of Waking Up past that usualness throughout their lives, of seeing that “Well, things are not really as I am being told that they are, really, and I really can’t get a straight answer to the simple question of ‘what’s it all about and what’s going on?’” We may sincerely open the doors of practice or enter the gates of practice with a pure heart and great sincerity and not notice that in fact we are still propelled by many of the patterns and we want to overlay the practice environment with what we know, or what we think we know. And it can be very strange for us when we notice, for example, that being a nice, polite person who says, “G’day, how are you?” is met by the monastic who answer the front door, with silence. That can make us a little jittery. We want something to bridge that distance so we might extend our hand. We are going to shake hands. And there is no monastic hand in evidence. Then we might get told that, well, one of the reasons that people started this greeting of shaking hands was so that they could frisk for weapons. That’s where the handshake came from. So we have these toys that we use to cover uncomfortable moments removed from us and we are left standing there with all sorts of thoughts running through us about “What are we doing here? What’s wrong with them? How come they’re so dour? How come they never smile?” And that question gets answered in a short time or a long time, depending. And we start to learn that

the monastery, this practice environment, has absolutely no relationship to our usual social understandings of how things are.

After the discomfort passes this can bring a great sense of relief to us because we do not need to bridge time. We can just stand there with our hands in the shashu mudra and watch and notice our own experience, including a sense of a watcher or a knower, which is a moment of experience and can be practiced with.

No one can pay a toll and buy their way in here either. There is no selling of dispensations, no little trinkets to hang on ourselves to make us feel “spiritual”. In fact we are asked to remove our little trinkets so that we are there, barefaced, barefoot and transparent...and one of my favourite phrases of Roshi: “*With our soft, white underbelly hanging out*” [laughter from students]. This can make us feel very vulnerable. But of course, in order to feel vulnerable there has to be some sort of danger, wouldn't you think? And this is the safest place you could be. Nothing is expected of you other than that you do your practice. You can't buy your way in; you can't wiggle your way in; you can't sneak in; but the sincerity of one foot after the other, the sincerity of doing our best not to collapse into whatever patterns are running is all that we need and that can only be done in this moment. And you are the only one that can do it. It's your bum on the cushion. It's your feet on the zabuton, your ankles, your knees. For 2600 years individuals just like you have done this practice without a bridge because you don't need a bridge to get where you are going when you already are where you are. And if you should think differently, “heh heh heh....have I got a bridge for you.”

Thank you for listening.

**MAY 29, 2004, DAINEN-JI**

# **Songs and Poems**

# **Backpacking the Straight Path**

## **Instructions for the Zendo**

Bare bones

bare flesh

ONLY

Leave the backpack of self image:

parent, child, male, female,

straight, gay, old, young,

black, white, older, younger

at the door with your

shoes and socks

Pick it up on the way out

Too heavy?

Unpack in Suchness

and the load

lightens

*Published in "The Straight Path"*

*by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi*

*Great Matter Publications, 1994.*

# **The Facts of Life**

## **A birthday song for a student**

(Waltz)

What would you do  
If I were to tell you  
You have everything  
that you need?

No trouble and strife  
No husband or wife  
No real need  
to succeed

Yes. You've got it all  
And you always did  
That's all that you  
have to know

Waltz it away  
This is your day  
It's the first of the rest  
Of your life

Now what do you want?  
How does it feel?  
What will it  
look like?

These facts of life  
Aren't really new  
They've been around  
for years

Don't waste your time  
On psychics or seers  
Programmed for life  
by deBoers

What would you do  
If I were to tell you  
You have everything  
that you need?

Nothing's forever  
Least of all love  
that marks  
the end of your fears.

What would you do  
If I were to tell you  
You have everything  
that you need?

2005

*Recorded on CD in 2006 by Casey Comeau & the Centretown  
Wilderness Club on the album "Taking Routes",  
Music for Cats label.*

## Poem for a student

Unable to express it completely in words  
The fact of freedom is already yours  
Natural dignity is who you are  
Be fooled by nothing  
Not even the scars

There is only one thing that you need to do  
Do it thoroughly, completely  
It brings freedom...  
to you

Breathe in so deeply the bodymind lightens  
You're alive  
In this moment  
So what will you do?

This moment has no room for problems it seems  
Problems are stories  
They're fiction that's all

Let them open  
Let them open  
Open they'll fall

Energy is what patterns are  
Reality brings liberation to all

Practice this moment and you will see  
Like a gift it falls open  
And it is free

What a wonder!  
What a wonder!  
What a wonder it is!

Enjoying this moment for that's all there is.

So?

2005



Ven. Shikai Zuiko, osho-ajari,  
photograph by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi



## **Autobiographical Afterthoughts**

Six and a half decades went into “Freedom & Tyranny”. The first forty-five years were free fall, tumbling through events, over most of which I had no control, trying to find what's really going on in this life and what happens when we die. Then I met Anzan Hoshin roshi who showed me what life really is. The next twenty were spent learning this Zen practice of sho-jo-no-shu or “realized-practice”

Over the forty-five years before meeting this Lineage through this teacher, I “was” a daughter, a caregiver, an actor in radio plays, a Brownie, a ballerina, an oldest child, a tour guide, girlfriends, a worker, a student nurse, an insurance underwriter, a wife, an actor and a production worker in broadcast television, a “babe”, a “media watcher”, a union organizer, a volunteer for a distress centre, an artist in multi-media, a designer, a dance teacher, a reader, a writer, a traveler, a business owner, a published poet and writer, a photographer, a film maker, a researcher, an advisor in development radio, all the while chewing on the question “what's going on, really?” and all the while looking for the answer to that question. I had been struck by the wonder of waterfalls; of 400 million year old fossils; mist on mountains; kittens; an old chimpanzee tracing the lines in my hand with his leathery finger and then, looking me directly in the eyes, tracing the same lines on his own hand. I had been stolen from and I had stolen and I had been lied to and I had lied. I'd been robbed and beaten in different situations including a coup in Africa. I had cried over the deaths of animals, friends, and family. Then early one morning, the Roshi instructed me in zazen and pointed out that I was not my thoughts and feelings.

The last twenty years, as the first monk ordained by Anzan roshi, the first practice advisor, as the first to serve in

all the monastic training posts and the first to receive transmission from Anzan roshi as a Dharma holder, have been even more interesting.

Having seen, and been shown how, to open the contractions of self-image there is no choice but to pass the teachings on for the happiness, peace, and freedom, of all beings.

Twenty-years ago during our first meeting Anzan Hoshin roshi told me I would become boring, just as he was. I didn't believe it at the time. Now I, too, am just another boring old monk.

Ven. Shikai osho  
Dainen-ji  
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Kitsune and Kido,  
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