4: Limitless Awakening

by Ven. Shikai Zuiko O-sensei
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> *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 practise, innumerable opportunities to practise 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", the Sensei 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".

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Thank you for listening.