

# Dharma Assembly: The Dragon in His Waters, the Tiger in Her Mountains Part 3 of 3

Dharma Talk Presented by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei (while practising as “Osho”)  
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This morning we come to the Hatto to practice. Although it might seem that practice is something we “do” or that we go some “where” to do, what it is that we are practising is not bound by time or place. As Eihei Dogen zenji says in the “Fukanzazengi”,

*“In this and all other worlds, in India or in China, every place is marked by the seal of Awake Awareness.”*

The metaphor here is that of a seal that is used to authenticate a document or a sho. So everything is marked by and is authentically and really Awake Awareness. Awake Awareness is everything, everywhere. It has no borders or boundaries, no nationality, no political affiliation, no “religion”. Awareness in itself, as itself, is indivisible even into knowing and known. The instruction is to recognize this in each moment. Whatever is known is the presencing of Knowing. Sit up straight in this.

Dogen zenji continues,

*“Upholding the essence of this Way, devote yourself to zazen, completely do zazen.”*

As Anzan Hoshin roshi has said, “If you want to know why you should sit, look at your mind. If you want to know how to sit, look at your mind.”

“Devote yourself to zazen” is an instruction to practice sincerely. Sincerity is not a feeling, nor is it a tangible some “thing” that can be felt. It is much simpler, and yet much subtler than we imagine it to be. It is simply following through, moment after moment after moment.

The text continues:

*“You might hear about ten thousand ways to practise but just be complete and sit.”*

I think Dogen zenji would be quite horrified if he could see how we are bombarded with spam about the ten thousand ways to practice and I could spend a lot of time going into all of that but his instruction is as simple, direct true now as it was then. What he is saying is that you should just be complete and sit.

Sakyamuni Buddha engaged in all kinds of practices that involved yogic exploitation and manipulation of every area of human experience, from states of intense concentration, to states of intense hunger and states of intense exertion and exhaustion. While he found out that many of these states could produce a change in how he felt, in the end, all they could do was produce various other states. He found that they revealed no insight into this fundamental question of existence. There was no freedom from the round of conditioned experience and falling into the birth and death of the various selves we believe that we are in various situations. The commerce of spirituality is selling states with the currency of hope and fear. Sitting up straight and being complete is being situated in reality.

Dogen Zenji asks us to consider this:

*“What’s the point of giving up your seat to go wandering around in dusty lands and countries? Take a wrong step and you’ll miss what’s there.”*

Wandering in dusty lands and countries could be taken to mean literally wandering from place to place, but of course, it is also a wonderful description of the “dusty” landscapes we wander through when lost in thought. The “red dusts” is often a way of speaking of samsara and its lifelessness. When you allow yourself to follow states and storylines you are “giving up your seat” because you are no longer even noticing that you are, in fact, not inside any of the states or storylines you fabricate. You are right here, right now, alive, breathing, seeing and hearing, sitting on a cushion, in a room and this is what is going on. Practise THIS moment of present experiencing instead of following dusty habitual patterns of thought and feeling. Heed Dogen zenji’s warning. He says, “take a wrong step and you’ll miss what’s there. You “take a wrong step” when you stop paying attention to what is most true of your life.

The text continues,

*“You’ve got what you need, the treasure of this body and birth, so don’t waste your time.”*

The “treasure of this body and birth” is the fact of life – that you are breathing and seeing and hearing and tasting, smelling, thinking and feeling and that you can Wake Up by practising in, as, and through the bodymind.

Dogen zenji then says,

*“Keep to this as the basis of the Way of Awake Awareness.”*

If you are not practising whole-bodily, you are not practising.

And then he says:

*“Don’t be attracted by just a spark from the flint.”*

People really like sparks. A “spark” might take the form of a moment of opening, a feeling of euphoria, a state of calmness not previously experienced, perhaps a moment of clarity or ‘quiet’. These fade quickly, but the memory remains of that “spark”, that ‘special moment’ that was experienced and people can become quite obsessed with trying to get “back” to it, trying to recreate it. Sometimes the obsession with the spark becomes so strong that it becomes the only thing of meaning in one’s life. This can wreak havoc in one’s life because there is no possible way that you can recreate the spark or get ‘back’ to it even if you spend a whole lifetime trying. Why? Because it was a state. How can you know that? Because it rose and fell. That is the hallmark of all states – they rise and fall. They are not permanent.

Sometimes a student will begin practising at the monastery who has one of these ‘sparks’ secreted away in memory and they will tend to view their ‘special experience’ as a kind of credential, something that they think should allow them to skip all the tedious mindfulness stuff. But if you enshrine some moment of clarity

that you have and try to live up to it, then you also condemn yourself. Beyond confusion, beyond clarity, what is it that all of these states are rising and falling within? What is it that is aware of anything at all? This is what all of this “mindfulness stuff” is pointing to. This is why you need to practise the forms, sit zazen, and receive instruction.

Striking the flint of this moment with the whole bodymind, don't stop at the sparks. Keep going and start a fire.

Dogen zenji says,

*“Anyway, your body is like dew on the grass, your life a flash of lightning; vain for a moment and then vanished in an instant.”*

You are the next in line for the end of your generation. How many generations have come and gone since human beings began to walk upright before falling over dead? How many births and deaths just in the past 100 years? In the past 50 years? More than you can possibly think about. All of these people who thought what they were doing was so important - all gone. And you will be gone sooner than you think, along with everything you thought “special” about you, and all the stuff you thought important - all gone. “Vain for a moment and then vanished in an instant”.

The text continues,

*“You who are in this excellent Lineage of Zen, don't blindly grope only a part of the elephant or fear the true dragon.”*

I doubt that anyone in this room has ever groped at an elephant so we need to use a little imagination here. Blinded by the constraints of self-image, you stretch out your hands before you, groping in the dark, guessing what might be ahead, and all of a sudden your hand contacts something. What is that? You have no idea at all what it is that you are holding in your hand. You simply cannot come up with a file match for it, so you start guessing, theorizing about what it might be. This discovery seems really big to you so you come up with all kinds of stories about this thing. But the elephant is not its tail, not its trunk, not its legs. It's larger than any part of it that you can grasp. And in reality, all you are feeling with your hand is the tail of the elephant.

As to fearing the true dragon: The Roshi mentions in his translation notes for the “Fukanzazengi” that there is a wonderful story in the Shenzi lueh or Shinshi ryaku about Ye Gongzi, a man who was fascinated by dragons. He had pictures and statues of dragons all over his house. One day, a dragon who had heard tales of this man's love of dragons decided to visit him. He went to the man's house and peeked through a window. The man was absolutely terrified. The true dragon is your own nature. Self-image is a fearful recoil from the vastness of this into its collection of petty images and stories and habits. The Lineage of Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors have given you the means to release the dragon.

The text continues,

*“Put all of yourself into this Way which directly presents your own nature.”*

You have this time to practice, you have everything you need to practice. So why hold anything back? Release yourself into sensations, colours, forms, sounds.

*“Be grateful to those who have come before and have done what was to be done.”*

This is not instructing you to conjure up stories about what others might have done or pump up a syrupy feeling of gratitude. It points out the obvious - that these Teachings have been preserved and carried forward by countless men and women and very often through extremely difficult circumstances and that without these efforts you would not be receiving these Teachings offered to you out of gratitude for the compassionate activity of the Buddhas.

*“Align yourself with the enlightenment of the Awakened Ones and take your place in this Samadhi-Lineage. Practice in this way and you’ll be what they are. The doors of the treasure house will fall open for you to do with as you will.”*

The treasure house is not closed to you unless you close yourself off from it. It is the vividness, the wakefulness, the richness inherent to experiences and the nature of experiencing. The doors fall open when you allow attention to fall open.

In “Buddhas Loose in the World” from the series, “The Primordially Awakened Way”, the Roshi says:

*“All the old Buddhas have realized that which is long past, never passing and unsurpassed. And so, we now have the precious opportunity to study, practice, realize and embody “the Way” of the old Buddhas.*

*“There are Buddhas loose in the world, you can hide from them, but there is no safe place in this world. Not only will ordinary old age, sickness and death inevitably have their way with you, but the earth itself is not a safe place. The only safe thing to do is to stop hiding, come out into the open moment and be as exposed to reality as the old Buddhas have done. When you do what you do out of a sense of richness instead of poverty, then you do the work of the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors.”*

We have now come to the end of this text, the “Fukanzazengi”. The text is like an enso with no beginning and no end because the spaciousness and wakefulness it points to has no beginning and no end. The entire text of the Fukanzazengi is marked with the seal of Dogen zenji’s realized practice and has been given to you by Eihei Dogen zenji so that you might practice the instructions it contains and yourself open to the richness and vividness of Awake Awareness.

So now, since we have turned and faced the wall, it is time to sit up straight in this moment. It is always this moment and it is always time to sit up straight, to stand up straight, to take each step with the whole bodymind and the whole world.