

# Tada!

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei  
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People have all kinds of expectations, not only about how their lives will be, but how today will be, or how this moment will be. But reality is not an idea. It is what it is. Tada.

In the colder autumn air, the trees are changing colour and fallen leaves line the gutters of the streets. And seeing this, we know winter is coming. But although most of us sitting here today have seen this happen again and again and again, year after year after year, we don't really know what the cold of winter will actually be like. We have memories of cold fingers, the sound of snow crunching underfoot, memories of having to put on many layers to protect ourselves from an icy wind. But memories of cold are not the reality of cold. It is what it is and we will know cold when it is...cold. Tada. And now, before the snow comes, we see the colour fading from our immediate world as the trees lose their leaves and bare branches stand out black against a greying sky. And mixed into, and swirling along with the leaves in the street, are discarded paper cups, gum wrappers, used Kleenex and the odd sandwich wrapper. All swirling in the wind. Is it beautiful? Is it ugly? Neither. Is it good or bad? Neither. It is Tada.

"Tada" is a Japanese word that means "Just, exactly, of course, just as it is." It is sometimes, as in the Teachings of Eihei Dogen zenji and Anzan Hoshin roshi, used as a synonym for the more technical term "immo" or "tathata" in Sanskrit, which means Suchness. Suchness is the reality of all dharmas, all things or experiences. The "actual nature" is another technical term for this. It means that each thing is sunya or empty of all of our ideas about and knowledge of anything, that it is impermanent, that it is the radiance of the Luminosity of experience.

Impermanence is so blatantly obvious. We see our grandparents die, and as we ourselves age, we see our parents die. We see other people around us die. We know that all around the world countless people die every day. But when someone close to us dies, we are so surprised. We are surprised when our relationships change, when the economy changes, when our environment changes and we are surprised that we have to change and that what we do has to change because of these changes. We are surprised when we become sick, surprised when we let things slide and difficulty ensues. And most of this surprise is due to a conflict that comes about when our ideas about reality do not match up with what reality actually is. Reality is Tada:

Things as they actually are. Suchness. Tada.

That itch behind your ear? Tada. That's it. The sensation of your hands resting in the mudra? That's it. The moisture you feel on your tongue? That's it. The movement of the breath? Just as it is. The form of the person sitting next to you? That's it. The release in your neck and spine when you straighten your posture? That's it. The sound of my voice and the quiet pauses between words? Exactly so. In the moment of Waking up from a thought, the recognition that streaming thoughts that can never settle on any one definitive "truth" because all that they can ever be is a continuously changing streaming? That's it. Tada.

The details of each thing stand out clearly and distinctly just as they are and experiencing is new and fresh, moment-to-moment. There is no need to embellish, to ponder, to strategize or hold on to anything whatsoever because each thing that is known is simply being known as detail arising within the Knowing of it. Tada. So simple.

But, of course, if you let attention narrow and focus, the distortion that focusing will produce is far from simple. We make such a big deal out of our stuff...

We can make a big deal out of a yawn: "Y-AAAAAAAAAAAAA-W-N".

Out of a sneeze "Ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-Choo!"

Out of a sensation "I have a...headache"; "I'm tired", "My knee hurts".

Out of a feeling tone (whiny, plaintive voice) "Oh but I thought I was supposed to...". "But you told me..."

Out of a stance "I'm right and I know I'm right and that's all there is to it".

Out of a petty memory: "I remember when you did that thing and how it made me feel and I will never, ever forgive you".

We can make a huge deal out of having to get up in the morning.

Out of having to go to bed at night.

Out of having to eat when it is time to eat.

Out of having to go to work.

Out of having to wait for a bus,

Out of which seat we get on the bus,

Out of simply having to sit down or stand up.

We make a big deal over the simplest of tasks.

Before we do them: "Ugh I have to do yada".

While we are doing them: "Ugh, when is this going to be finished?"

And even after we've done them "I did SUCH a good job of that. Never has such a good job been done of that

thing by anyone, anywhere, and everyone else should acknowledge that.”

We make a big deal of how we look at other people and how they look at us because we think it all “MEANS” something. It “MEANS” something about “ME”.

“I am so sad. Look at my mournful eyes, so deep and full of feeling”.

“I am so angry, look how I GLARE at you”. (that one can be pretty funny).

“I am sick, look how haggard I am, how near death I am”.

Just stop with the “yada yada yada.” Just tada. Just practise.

But we can make a big deal out of anything and everything, including our practice. We can make such a big bloody deal out of being mindful that instead of just practising it’s ME practising. Tadaaaaaaaa!

But that’s the wrong kind of tada. The richness, the dignity, the intimacy of our experience just as it is, without all of our fabrications and contractions and manipulations is inconceivable. It is literally and completely beyond concepts and ideas and stories. In order to realize this, we need to just let go of our habits of attention in all of the ways they are manifested by body and mind.

The Roshi has pointed out that a sense of a “me” is more directly and basically a “sense of locatedness” and that along with it there is a directionality, as it can seem to us that attention moves from a central point, a “me”, out and towards experiences. When this sense of locatedness first begins to form, it is the wordless presumption that knowing moves from “here” to “there” in order to know. And yet, this sense of locatedness as a self can itself be known and so obviously cannot be a “knower” or a “self”. It is a freezing or crystallization of attention which is much like a frame and from this frame, attention seems to move out and towards what is known. This is why instead of just practising, it can seem to us that there is a “ME” that is practising.

In Rhythm and Song, a series of teisho on Dongshan Liangjie daiosho’s text the Hokyo Zanmai, Anzan roshi recounts many mondo-kien or encounter dialogues between Great Master Dongshan and his students. One student was Xuefeng, who much later became a great Teacher after receiving Transmission from Deshan who unlike Dongshan did not mind beating students with his staff. But while he was studying with Dongshan, Xuefeng was still full of himself and full of ideas about Suchness and emptiness. Here is one story:

*Once Xuefeng was carrying a bundle of firewood. When he arrived in front of the Master, he threw the bundle down.*

*The Master asked, “How heavy is it?”*

*Xuefeng said, “No one in the world can lift it!”*

*Dongshan asked, “Then how did it get here?”*

*Xuefeng didn’t know what to say.*

Poor Xuefeng. What a tool. He was a tool because he was trying to use everything around him as equipment

to aggrandize himself. Even a bundle of firewood. Even the simple act of carrying it. For him even samu, caretaking practice, was about the profundity of his idea of his understanding of emptiness. What a tool.

In Rhythm and Song, Anzan Hoshin roshi calls out to us from what all of the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors of our Lineage have realized and practised,

Intimacy is revealed when we release. We release when we realize that there is nowhere apart from us that we can drop away all of the things about ourselves that we wish were not the case; all of the thoughts and feelings and strategies that at times we are so tired of, and at others, so convinced of.

It is not as simple as that.

It is much, much, easier than that.

It is the simplest thing.

Nothing is true about us. Our nice thoughts do not make us nice. Our devious thoughts do not make us devious. Our bad thoughts do not make us bad.

A thought cannot make anything.

There is nowhere to hide because there is no need to hide.

There is nothing that is true 'about' us because we are that which is true. We are that which presents itself everywhere as everything and yet is itself nowhere at all, no thing at all.

You are this deep intimacy.

Where have you been?

So please join me in not just saying, but in actually being: Tada.