Wherever You Stand 16: Yoka daishi's (Yongjia) Shodoka: Song of Freedom part 5

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Previously on "Wherever You Stand",
this investigation into Yoka daishi's "Shodoka",
we ended with a statement basically and
basic to practice:

The Buddha seems to have been pointing to one's own experience,
instructing how to notice,
saying that
practice is not a philosophy,
but it is what is
seen
felt
heard
tasted
in this moment
of YOUR experiencing.

It is interesting to realize that although self-image wants everything to be about it,
me, me me me,
me, me, I
the Centre of the Universe,
although that is what self-image wants, here we have a situation where
truly
practice is all about YOU
and you and you and you and you,
it's all about each and every one of you
in THIS moment
of YOUR experiencing.

This is what you build on.
The bodymind is how anything at all is known.
Self-evident, a no-brainer, really,
and you're the Knowing
of the experiencing of
the bodymind.

So, sit with that,
recognize moment to moment to moment
the experiences.

So we'll pick up the "Shodoka" at:

> *The wish-fulfilling pearl is not recognized by beings*
> *but here it is*
> *within the matrix of Reality as a continual presencing.*

Now this "wish-fulfilling pearl" or
sometimes a "jewel", it's sometimes spoken of as "jewel"
is actually referring to Reality.
Really.
Awareness itself.
Tatagatha.

Dogen zenji states in the "Fukanzazengi" that "the doors of the treasure house will fall open for you to do with as you will".

So as habits and patterns
and as those pieces of gristly knots that have been formed out of stories
about who you are and how the world is
start to open,
Awareness itself,
that "in" within which everything arises,
becomes more and more apparent,
more and more who you really are
in this moment
and this moment
and the next moment.

The next verse:

> *The functioning of the six senses are neither*
> *"is" nor "not",*
> *and come from luminosity neither*
> *formed nor formless.*

The six senses are of course
the eye: for vision,
the ear: sound and hearing,
three: the nose – odor, smelling,
four: the tongue and taste,
five: bodymind, touch,
and six: the mind.

Clarifying the obstructions through the practice of
when anything at all is noticed,

feeling the breath,
sitting up straight,
opening the eye gaze,
practising this moment,
does indeed allow the senses,
it does allow the functioning of the bodymind to be more clear
to be more open
to reach its actual extent
rather than to have it limited by
absurd fascinations on things that might not ever happen
or what may have happened in the past but are poorly remembered.

So we're not very good at noticing Reality,
but we're getting better and better
each moment that we do notice a dharma,
a moment of experience,
and actually practise it
NOW.

THIS now.
And
THIS now.

The Roshi has said, about this verse in the "Shodoka":

> *The six sense bases and the fields and the six sense fields arise together, functioning clearly. You hear this sound. How do you do that? A thought comes up. How do you do that? You look at the wall and there it is. How do you do that?*
> *This functioning is not based on strategies, it has no ease nor knot within it, it doesn't deviate. Clearly seeing, clearly hearing. The six sense bases and the six sense fields both arise within awareness, within luminosity. Objects of awareness arise continuously, this teisho, that itch on the elbow, this breath, thoughts, feelings. All that you experience is the unobstructed nature of mind itself. But Awareness is not any of these objects, it is not contained within them. It is not trapped by them, it is not obstructed by them. And yet, although it has no content or form, it is not dead, it is not static. There are these sounds. There is the grain of the wood on the floor. There is your stomach burbling and doing its work digesting miso soup. This luminosity itself, Tathagatagharba, this awareness, this mind.*

And literally:
you can't get away from it!

Awareness IS the only condition.
All that is arises AS the Display of Awareness.

"Well of course, I knew THAT."

" How come I don't know it all the time?"

Well, keep on doing as you are doing
and one day there will be no need for the “knowing” of it,
there will just be
being it.

The next verse:

> *Clarifying the five kinds of vision*
> *brings the five powers.*

Whoaoooohhhh…. [laughter]

“Five kinds of vision”
traditionally referred to

1: The eye of ordinary people
2: The heavenly eye, the divine eye, which perceives things in the darkness, at a distance, or ‘beyond physical limits’ (whatever that means)
3: The Wisdom eye, ability to see that nothing has an existence of its own (separate from everything else)
4: The Dharma eye, sees Reality
5: The Buddha eye, perceives the true nature of life; past, present, and future.

“Oogledy-boogledy, I want some of that!” [giggles]

And we can see how stories of remarkable powers were developed almost by themselves and were developed and nurtured by people, when actually, what is being talked about is Reality. We’ve all, I’m sure, had the experience which may increase in number of occurrences, of knowing who was walking down the hall, without seeing them, but just feeling into the cadence of the steps, the rhythm.

We’ve all been quite surprised, perhaps, by that sense of knowing what’s going to happen before something happens…

Well, really,
all sorts of senses, and sensory information have been picked up by the bodymind and processed before self-image could get in there and muck around, try to control.

So yeah, we tend to see more clearly, literally,
we start to notice things
that perhaps have always been around us,
but we just never noticed before
because we were so busy
listening to self-image
with its “gimme gimme gimmes”
its “gets gets gets”
its “wants wants wants”.

And as that, and those occurrences are practised with,

they open up,
we're not fooled by them any longer,
they wear out.

Now the "five powers"
or "five strengths"
in Sanskrit and Pali: panca bala.

Panca means five, and you remember that:
prapanca means something going on five times longer than necessary.

Panca bala.
Bala: power, strength, force,
The five strengths;
faith-saddha
energy, effort, or persistence-virya
mindfulness-sati
concentration-samadhi
Wisdom, discernment-prajna.

So we have faith, an antidote to doubt.
No problem having doubt.
And what are you going to have faith in?
Faith in your own experience.

Everyone in this room has woken up from a thought
and noticed
and known
that they've woken up from that thought.

What happens when there's a waking up from any thought whatsoever,
regardless of the content?
Everything brightens.
Literally.

We like to say "the room got brighter".
No, the room is as it was,
your perception of the room changed because
with that opening
with that practising of that moment,
that moment of waking up,
the bodymind opened,
seeing was more clear,
hearing was literally more clear.
That moment, and those many moments like that
are what you build your practice on.

Learn to have faith in your own experience.

Again, the antidote to doubt.
Doubt comes up,
doubt HAS to be thoughts,
it has to be.

When things like that come up,
raise them during practice interviews or daisan.

Faith: antidote to doubt,
energy, persistence, effort (virya): antidote to laziness! [O-sensei and students laugh]

Now laziness, what is that?
Well a lot of the time, what it is is just…

"Ugh, I don't feel like it… If I uh, you know, hear, I can see, there's like an eighth of an inch of milk in the bottom of the milk bottle. Well, never mind, I didn't really see it. I'll just open another milk bottle, because if I have to empty that eighth of an inch out of that bottle, I will have to wash it. Didn't see a thing…." [laughter]

When in reality, it takes longer to think about that than to pick up the bottle, do the thing, run it under the water—done.

So we start to notice all of these little [whispered] "shortcuts" that we take.
Well they're not really shortcuts.
What they really are is self-image being allowed to run away with a lot of your energy actually, and it's also causing the people who come after problems,
but self-image often has an attitude of:

"Well, frak them… It's all about me!!"

We learn to stand with our feet together,
we learn to stand balanced,
we learn to pay attention.

It's laziness slumping around,
and a lot of the time we say:
"Well I just didn't know…that.."

Which of course is a lie,
we just didn't do it.

Mindfulness,
sati,
an antidote to heedlessness.

Heedlessness:

just not paying attention,
self-image just blundering around
with its elbows out
strewing its crap all over the place,
both mental, so to speak,
and physical.

Concentration.
Well, concentration, we're not talking about focussing here,
words really are kind of shifty.

So let's say what we're talking about is open attention.
We're noticing what's going on.
We start to notice when we become distracted,
so concentration,
or samadhi: antidote to distraction,
and wisdom: antidote to ignorance.

So, there we have them all laid out.

Isn't that nice?

And, these are not burdens,
you don't have to memorize the lists,
although it is certainly nice,
over time,
as you become familiar with what is taught,
to pick up some of the words,
even in Japanese,
about what is being talked about,
even in Pali,
even in Sanskrit,
just a few,
you're not being asked to study Japanese,
or Sanskrit or Pali,
but as your vocabulary of practice widens,
you start to understand that it really is multinational.

Oh I'm sorry I said that word "national",
anyway,
it's all-pervasive,
it includes so much,
it's travelled so much
over so many centuries,
and you can have fun with it.

Another verse:

> *When you experience the truth*
> *you are without speculation.*

When you experience the truth over and over again,
the truth of what's being taught,
speculation may drop away.

Nevertheless,
speculation is a thought,
it's not a bad thing,
it's just a thought,
so no matter what
theories or
ruminations,
speculations,
criticisms,
comments,
whatever we call them,
come up,
they're all thoughts,
and they never can contain or encompass Awareness

because they arise within it.

They are dharma,
moments of experience,

and when you notice any moment of experience,
you of course practise mindfulness of breath
and bodymind
in
THIS moment.

Knowing is free of knowns and known.
Knowner and knowns
all arise within Knowing,
just a different way of saying:

Awareness is the only condition.

Knowing cannot be contained,
it need not be disturbed by any known
or any concept of a knower.

You can see your reflection in a mirror
but can you grasp the moon
reflected in the water?

Questions, questions, questions…

Are you looking at YOUR face in the mirror?
Is THAT who you are?
Is THIS who you are?

Amazingly
you can never
have never
and will never
see yourself.

It's impossible.

That's at a very basic level.

You look in a mirror:
you see a reflection.

It's backwards.
It's reversed.
That's not what you look like to others.

You see a photograph.
That is a moment in time
that has been captured,
and is affected by
light
chemistry
or electronics…

You don't look like that.
You have never looked like that
and you will never look like that.
It is just what it is in that moment.

So if you are prone to hanging your identity on what you think you look like…
well…
you're hanging it on something that does not exist.

Yowza!
Wake up!

You can never see yourself.

You see the moon,
you see the reflection in the water.

Can you grasp them as well?

Well you can grasp them about as efficiently as you can grasp that reflection of yourself.

What we can do is appreciate what we are noticing
in this moment,
appreciate the fact that we are noticing something.
If that's going on,
you're alive in this moment,
so feel the breath,
feel the whole bodymind,
open to the basic intelligence,
the luminosity of this moment.

And actually, you know,
you can see the moon more clearly and accurately
than you have ever seen,
can ever see,
or will ever see
yourself.

And, when you think about it,
we have a world,
a social system,
a culture
that is based on,
in many cases,
appearances.

> *We always walk alone;*
> *yet those who have attained all tread*
> *the same Way of liberation.*

Recognize that,
it's true.

We can be surrounded by people
we can create webs of relationships
—nothing wrong with that, nothing wrong at all—
however, the fact is,
we are always alone.

So it might be nice to get acquainted with what's actually happening
in this moment
to
YOU.

Now, we can notice patterns of always looking for company,
always looking around for
the "One"
seeking out
"like-minded" people…
all to get rid of the nattering of self-image
and the pain of contraction.

We seek comfort,
we seek solace,
we seek to be "understood"
we seek to impress… oh, everybody…
we seek to be the master of our domain.

Well, good luck.

When you are actually practising, you're in fact freeing yourself from these shackles and chains.
It doesn't mean that you're removing yourself—not at all—from day to day activities.
You're not removing yourself from "the world".

It's impossible to do,
I mean if you're alive…

What you're doing is actually learning to experience and appreciate,
and understand through your own experiencing
what's actually going on…

unconditional freedom

Another verse:

> *Following this ancient Way, have a light heart.*
> *Wild looking, bones hardened,*
> *no one will notice you.*

The word used is "ancient" and bear in mind, the original text was written some 1300 years ago, so it's actually 1300 years older now than when Yoka daishi wrote about it in the 8th century, but yet it was "this ancient Way", this way of practice which had been going on for quite some time.

"Wild looking"…

Think of Bodhidharma,

be reminded of those eyes…

Now, you do not want to go around “wild-looking”
that would just be an affectation,
just meaningless slothful behaviour.

Take care of yourself,
recognize that you need not adapt any stance or strategy whatsoever.

Literally: be yourself in this moment!
Notice what’s going on in
THIS moment.

At the moment of noticing:
feel the breath,
feel the whole bodymind,
feel this whole moment.

Thank you for listening.