

Wherever You Stand 21: Yoka daishi's (Yongjia) Shodoka: Song of Liberation part 10

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Good morning
and thank you
to each and every one of you
for arriving at
the zafu
to practise
this practice of Luminosity
which has been taught for
2600 years
refined
passed down through Bodhidharma
and today we're looking at Yoka daishi's "Shodoka: Song of Liberation".

Last time, we finished with the Three Jewels,
looking into the precepts.

*Awareness is the Only Condition.
All that is arises as the Display of Awareness.
This is the Seamless Expanse of all that is.*

Recognize it?

Right,
we just chanted it.

We chanted it at the beginning of this sitting

we chant it at the beginning of every formal sitting
as a reminder of the practice
and of how to practise.

Once again, I recommend to each and every one of you
with the Mind that Seeks the Way
to go to our website
and look at what is and has been presented on the Three Jewels.
You'll be surprised, because the Three Jewels contain,
as we examine them,
all of the Teachings.

Today's verse:

*The luminous mirror of Knowing reflects all shown it,
its vast brilliance pervades numberless worlds.*

That's pretty well self-explanatory.

Awareness IS the Only Condition,

...everything that is reflected in the mirror
is reflected in that mirror of Awareness.

You're the Knowing of experiences.

You're not a knower,
but you are the Knowing of dharma
or moments of experience of the bodymind.

You are the Knowing of knowns.

There is no knower.

If a sense of a knower is noticed,
you have a moment
a very clear moment
where you can recognize you've noticed something,
you can feel the breath
you can feel the whole bodymind
you can practise that moment of clear seeing,
that moment of Knowing.

All that is arises as the Display of Awareness.

ALL

all

all...

Good!

[laughter]

Nothing,
there is no thing
there is no moment of experience
that is excluded,
this is all-inclusive
and

This is the Seamless Expanse of all that is.

ALL-inclusive.

Sometimes it can be a little difficult to comprehend that
because the usual world,
the world of social interaction
the world that is outside of,
as it were,
the world that practises,
although it cannot really be outside of it,
but the usual way of looking at things is to divide,
to segment
basically everything.

We can start with “good” and “bad”
we can start with “like” and “dislike”
and it goes on from there
until the self,
this contraction into a sense of self,
which occurs many many many many times
has divided up experiencing
basically into:
that which can be accepted,
that which can be ignored,
and that which can be killed.

Now that is a gross simplification
but it happens to be true.

And when we see that sense of self come into being
with its likes and dislikes,
at that moment of clear seeing,
feel the breath,
feel the whole bodymind,
actually practise.

You’ve seen something clearly.
That is not “you,”
it is an experience,
it is a dharma,
it’s something that’s going on,
and through your practice you understand
you need not be compelled to act out these random thoughts and feelings,
but

you can see them clearly.

You can also see
as you start to see more and more clearly
that there are more subtle aspects of the self
which can come up
and
feel
guilty
about having had such a thought,
ashamed
about having had such a thought...

It's a bit like a cat in a litter box,
we scrabble and try to cover up those pieces of shit
so that no one else will see them.

We realize we need not cover them up,
there is nothing to be covered up,
they are just moments of experience
and the more you see them,
the more opportunity you have to actually
practise at that moment of clear seeing.

So there's nothing to cover up,
there's nothing to be hidden.

And then we start to understand
that this is the same for everybody
to a greater or lesser degree,
we are all experiencing the same thing.
The content might be different
but the process is remarkably the same.

So what Yoka daishi is writing about here
is what he realized 1300 years ago
and what he realized,
what he understood,
and what he spent his time writing down
is as true today as it was 1300 years ago.

Isn't that interesting?

"Yes, it is interesting, yes, Sensei, you're right."
[giggles around the room]

All that is, the ten thousand experiences,

arise as this luminosity beyond within or without.

So, why ten thousand?
Well that just means like a whole lot,
the uncountable,
the “so many”,
they all arise within Awareness.

“Beyond within or without”?
There is no “within” or “without”,
there is no “inside” or “outside”,
these are convenient descriptions,
they’re shortcuts
but they’re not the truth.

*Don’t grasp at “voidness” and ignore cause and effect;
such reckless confusion leads only to suffering.*

Well we have understanding,
self-image likes to believe that it’s working towards a goal,
so one of the goals that has come up over the years has been this word
“voidness”
or
“emptiness”
so somehow people came to the conclusion
that what they’re doing is sitting to rid themselves
of any experiencing whatsoever.

So they can work quite diligently to block out
the knowledge of other thoughts
of other feelings
of other sensations
by focussing on just one thing.

I’m not going to name names of different practices
but I’m sure you’ve all come across those type of practices
through reading or through actual involvement in them,
and what Yoka daishi is saying is:
Don’t do it, don’t just grasp at some concept
and then try and work yourself towards something that isn’t even happening,
so with “voidness”,
trying to grasp at a state of emptiness or stillness.

Cause and effect,
or karma,

the word "karma" does mean cause and effect,
we're talking cause and effect
we're talking about knowns.

We can know as we start to sit that certain situations
certain contexts
certain thoughts
may trigger certain effects,
we can know that through the clear seeing of it
and we start to uncover—
without focussing in on a search for a seminal event
that caused us such aggravation,
we can just see the coming and going
of random thoughts and feelings
and recognize that

"Oh, this is what causes this to arise...
I don't have to do anything about it
except feel the breath,
feel the whole bodymind,
except practise."

There's nothing to fix,
there's nothing to grab onto,
all there is is this fluidity of dharma,
the fluidity of moments of experience rising and falling
in this moment,
they're always arising and falling
in THIS moment
and we can see them
and we see more of them
and more of them,
and sometimes self-image will put in an appearance and go:

"Wait a minute! Just hold on here,
I'm having more thoughts about what's going on,
I'm having more more thoughts about the condition of my life,
I'm having more thoughts that bug me than ever before,
so it's got to be the fault of practice."

But,
what this clearly points to,
and you've probably recognized it already,
is that lots and lots of moments of experience passed us by
without even being recognized
because we were so focussed on our "favourite" one, two, or three things

that we didn't notice the rest.

So now we're just noticing more and more
so the fact that there may be more and more thoughts is good,
it's like having more manure for the roses.

The more you notice,
the more you can practise,
the more things will open up.

That's just true.

*Rejecting the truth and grasping at entities is
also a mistake,
it's like jumping into a fire to avoid drowning.*

The "truth", what's the truth?
Well, we're talking about the truth of Reality,
the truth of this moment,
the truth of perhaps that bead of sweat that's rolling down your back,
the truth of hearing the fan in this moment,
we're talking about direct experience.

Whose experience?

Your experience
in this moment.

No point in rejecting it
by making it someone else's business to take care of.

We human beings, it would seem, would really rather do nothing.
We'd rather put it on something else,
some other rupa,
or statue or form,
to take care of us,
we'd rather say:
"Oh, I'll make a lot of offerings and then the Buddha will do it."

I'm not going to take that thought any further because I think it's like so obvious...
Entities,
bodhisattvas,
figures,
all-seeing,
all-knowing,
who will do what we ourselves are too lazy to do
because it is easier

it would seem
to believe something
than to actually do something.

So don't grasp on to entities
it's obvious to anyone with a brain in their head
that
that grasping on to entities has not worked in the course of human history.
Oh sorry, it's worked, but not in a way that is useful to any beings whatsoever.

And "jumping into a fire to avoid drowning"
that's quite cute, I like that,
so trying to grasp onto something or someone else that doesn't exist
to correct what you perceive as going wrong for you?
Well, burn baby burn! [laughter]

*To reject delusion and grasp at the truth
suits perfectly the mind of like and dislike.*

So yes, then we can spend our time figuring what's a delusion and should be practised with,
and what is the truth—that we like...
So there you have usual mind doing its usual stuff.
Self-image loves that,
it gives it something to do
rather than to sit facing that blank wall
seeing moments of experience rise and fall
and doing something as arduous as
feeling the breath
sitting up straight
feeling the whole bodymind.
[O-sensei and students laugh]

Yes...

*Students who practise this way,
it's like mistaking a thief as your own son.*

So we have that sense of not seeing clearly whatsoever
because we're so busy with figuring out
what we like
and
what we don't like
that we forget that it doesn't matter what we like or don't like
when we're sitting in front of that wall,
we can practise.

And then we start to understand
since this practice can be done
wherever you
stand
sit
walk
lie down
stir
cut
hammer
nail,
any time you notice anything,
you can feel the breath...

It's there,
you might as well notice it,
and it takes no effort whatsoever

... and you start to understand
that once this thought of noticing the breath comes up,
it's because you've actually noticed it
it's actually there
but somehow we're so used to believing that nothing has happened
until we've talked to ourselves about it,
so we start to notice that we've noticed the breath;
it presented itself,
we've noticed the bodymind;
it presented itself to Knowing,
we noticed a thought about it;
it presented itself to Knowing.

Guess what? A dream come true,
we don't have to do anything!
We just have to notice what's there.

How easy is that?

... How difficult do you make it? ...

*Ignoring the treasure of Reality and losing the merit
to Awaken self and others
is due to the eighth, seventh and sixth consciousnesses.*

Now the eight consciousnesses are a development of the Yogacara school of Buddhism and all of the schools of Buddhism have in common the five senses. We have seeing and hearing and tasting and touching and feeling and smelling because there are six there. The feeling falls into thinking and thoughts, falls into mind,

so all the schools seem to have in common the five senses and the mind.

Then the Yogacara school took it a little further and started to include the obscurations of the mind, or the manas and then came up with, and this is attributed to Vasubandhu, (NOTE: did you mean Vasubandhu?yes) the storehouse-consciousnesses, alayavijnana, and the Chan and Zen schools, some of them were saying this is Buddha-nature.

What Yoka daishi is saying here,
is that the eighth, seventh, and sixth consciousnesses
are getting into descriptions
of what's going on
rather than the actual experiencing of the five senses.
When that happens,
many can fall into believing that that is what is more important,
"so let's just forget about the seeing,
and the hearing,
and the tasting,
and the touching,
and the smelling,
because it's so mundane,
it has no 'intellectual'—
oh what shall we call it?
'merit' let's say,
it's base,
it has to do with the physical body.
How disgusting!
So let's move it up into something that's more
ethereal,
yes, yes,
more spiritual!"

So we can see where that kind of approach could lead.

A caveat here:

I am not saying that it isn't worthwhile to study and read about all these different approaches and practices, all the things that people have done. I think it is very important because if we don't do that, we could end up in some sort of "1984" is a dystopian novel by George Orwell about omnipresent government surveillance, mind control, and the persecution of individualism and independent thinking.ish world where there is one way of thinking about something. That's the problem.

We don't want to fall into that type of understanding, we want to know, to experience, and to practice what works.

We want to wake up!

And here Yoka daishi has a final verse for us today:

With direct insight into these,

(the senses, sense bases)

*...practise Zen
and realise the Unborn with Radiant Intelligence.*

Why not?

I'll say it again:

*With direct insight into these, practise Zen
and realise the Unborn with Radiant Intelligence.*

Now, is there anyone in this room,
in this Hatto,
who would like to refuse the offer of "Radiant Intelligence"?

Do I see any hands?

Not a one!

So feel the breath,
feel the whole bodymind,
open to the Radiance of this moment.

Have a good time,
you cannot help but have a good time, actually...

Thank you for listening.