

Wherever You Stand 22: Yoka daishi's (Yongjia) Shodoka: Song of Liberation part 11

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Last time we closed with the verse:

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

...which I'm sure of course you all have been doing...

and it's simple, isn't it?

As we've discussed previously,
on "Wherever You Stand",
wherever you stand,
sit,
walk,
lie down,
is where you practise

at the moment of noticing

anything

whatsoever.

We'll continue with Yoka daishi's "Shodoka":

*Be strong and use the sword of insight.
Its blade is sharp and bright as the vajra,

it severs confusion
and the pride of shining beings and demons.*

Now, I'm sure some of you have seen a vajra,
and I believe in the W5, or "Who, What, Where, When, and Why"
about monastery objects, we covered a vajra.

A vajra is an instrument or a tool,
it can be of various sizes,
it's made of metal,
and it's held in the hands during certain practices.

Vajra is a Sanskrit word

and it means “thunderbolt” and “diamond”.

A thunderbolt:

irresistible force

and

a diamond signifying indestructibility,

so a very powerful,

irresistible force and indestructibility.

These objects have on each end spokes or fingers,
some are three-spoked, some five, some nine-spoked.

The five-spoked vajra has these five spokes

signifying the antidotes,

as it were,

the wisdoms

which can counteract

the so-called “poisons” of,

for example,

anger and hatred.

We have the spoke of the mirror-like wisdom,
when all obscurations have been opened,
so that when anger and hatred should happen to arise,
it’s seen just as a harmless yet powerful force
to be used,
we can use the energy of that
to do what has to be done.

We have the wisdom of equanimity
which defuses greed and
goodness knows there’s a lot of that around...
it’s a quality,
this quality of greed
is something that’s very strong and is a big driving force in social culture,
but when these energies are simply seen
as energies
rather than as energies that are pointing toward acquisition,
pointing toward anger,
pointing toward hatred,
those energies are available
to each individual
to do what they need to do.

Then we have the wisdom of individual analysis
which works against desire,
discrimination is purified

and each gets what is needed.

The all-accomplishing wisdom
which has been described as the antidote to envy,
the sphere of Reality,
the wisdom of Reality,
the wisdom of understanding completely
what is happening in each moment,
which cuts through delusion
cuts through the separation into self and other
that is such a major cause of major problems.

The second two lines of that verse:

*it severs confusion
and the pride of shining beings and demons.*

...and we have experienced the pride
pride in who we think we are
pride in where we think we came from
and fail to recognize it
as being simply another way
of separating ourselves
into some individual node
that can look out and
see everything else
as other
to it.

So the vajra is symbolic of practices
that can help cut through that bullshit
and the main practice
is the one you're doing right now,
with THIS breath.

So when you notice
again

ANYTHING

feel the breath,
feel the whole bodymind,
cut through it.

The verse:

*The thunder of the Reality rolls:
beat the drum of the Teachings,

spread clouds of compassion
and loose the rain of nectar.*

We can get very confused,
you know,
because we think Reality,
well,
Reality is very much what self-image
would like to adapt,
would like to pull
and make stories about
that fit its own ideas
of what's going on.

So it wants to prop up,
it wants to take its stories
and use all sorts of means
to give them validity
so that it can be seen
to be a self
that is superior to the other selves,
it's SPECIAL
it knows what's going on!
It knows what is real and what isn't,
it can act out in all sorts of very insulting manners
because it believes that it's dealing with the truth.

All you have to do
is see those things,
see those attitudes,
see them for what they are,
they're not who you are,
they're patterns that have been picked up on
many many
nasty street corners...
[students giggle]

... so use the moment of clear seeing
to open them
and actually
hear the beat of the drum
of the Teachings.

People can feel that when they're corrected,
when they're given information
that can bring them in line with the Teachings,
that they're being picked on,
that they're being taken aside and made a special case of,
rather than recognizing
that's just self-image acting out in another way.

Get rid of it!
It's done you no good up to now!

Just let it go
and then out of that,
out of your own experience
of seeing how you have distorted moments of Reality,
how you have distorted moments of compassion
into afflictions,
you can start to understand more and more clearly
what's going on with others in many situations.

Back to the verses:

*"Dragons" and "elephants" arise to benefit countless beings
and lead the five types of students through
the Three Aspects of the Teachings.*

We've touched on dragons and elephants,
mentioned they are signifiers,
they are descriptions of certain personal styles.

Dragons can be fiery and quick.
Elephants: they're biiiiiiig....
they may move more slowly
but BOTH types of personal styles
can presence even in one individual
in different moments,
as they work with students,
so that countless beings can be benefited
and
"lead the five types of students through
the Three Aspects of the Teachings."

Well, I'm sure you're all familiar with,
or perhaps you're not,
with "[Begin Here: Five Styles of Zen](#)"
from Anzan Hoshin roshi's book "Before Thinking".

This was delivered at Zazenji in October of 1989,
and in it there are these five descriptions
of five styles or five approaches to Zen,
and this was originally taught in China
in the Tang Dynasty by Tsung-mi, a Chan master,
the fifth Ancestor of the Hua Yen tradition.

He spoke of five different kinds of Zen:
bompu zen, or "usual zen",
gedo Zen, or "Outside Way zen",
shojo zen or "Hinayana practice,"
daijo zen or "Great Practice zen"
and saijojo zen or "Easy and perfect" zen.

In this sense, we could say that zen with a small "z"
means simply a form of practising.

In bompu zen, or usual zen,
people engage in a meditation practice
to procure the same kinds of things
that they've always been looking for:
health,
happiness,
some sense of well-being,
and there's nothing wrong with that,
but it's certainly not the place where you want to stop.

Now I'm not going to read the whole text
because the Roshi has presented it,
you can listen to it,
and you can read it,
and I recommend that you do so,
especially if you're engaged in some kind of thought patterns
about Daoist thought,
about pyramids,
about this thing and that thing and the other thing...
If you're seeking those other areas,
you might enjoy reading this
and it might help you clarify some of what you're going through.

But bompu zen basically is concerned mainly with the issues of health and well-being,
a fine place to start
but
you don't want to stop there,
and
you don't need to stop there.

The next is gedo zen,
it means "Outside Way",
a practice that isn't Buddhist practice as such.

Gedo zen puts us outside of our life,

*...giving us a way to feel "spiritual", a way to try to get something that is going to make us into a big S
Self, something that cannot be assailed, something that cannot be brought into question, a big cosmic
Self-Image.[fn][Begin Here: Five Styles of Zen](#)[/fn]*

Well,
don't want to stop there.
You may have moments like that...
What do you do?
At the moment of seeing that,
because it's a thought,
practise!
Feel the breath,
feel the whole bodymind.

"Gedo zen is religious in intents and methods."

Well, it can be an intoxication as well
like alcohol or drugs,
transporting you out of your own experience and life
into a temporary state of ease.

So this can happen when students sit retreat.
They can convince themselves that they are enjoying a blissful little state
of something or other
that they've self-created,
and not recognize it until a Practice Advisor or a Teacher comes along
and interrupts their "peaceful, blissful" state.

So that's what they're marinating in at that point.
See it,
no problem,
feel the breath,
sit up straight,
shut up,
just practise.

Shojo zen:

*...means "Hinayana", or "Small Vehicle" zen. This is actually concerned with trying to realize
Buddhadharma. It is beginning to actually work with life as it is, and to examine our own "self", our own*

suffering and confusion in order to not only relieve us of the symptoms but to cure the cause. It is a profoundly vital investigation into perception and cognition.[fn]Ibid[/fn]

Aha!

Starting to recognize

...the Teachings tell us things like “just pay attention to what’s going on”... But it also says things like “right from the beginning, not one thing” or “form is emptiness, emptiness is form”. What does that mean?[fn]Ibid[/fn]

We can only understand these things through our own practice,
only the mind of practice can understand what practice is,
and if your thoughts are telling you that you understand,
recognize:
that’s a thought,
practise at that moment
or
you will end up practising your misunderstanding.

No problem,
it will get cleared up over time.

Daijo zen:

...“Great Practice Zen” which is the practice of the Mahayana or the “Great and Open Way.”

It embraces everything in our life.

The whole of the Mahayana is embodied in the Shi Gu Sei Gan, the “Four Great Vows” that are chanted after the formal sittings.[fn]Ibid[/fn]

*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.*

So your practice is not just for you,
it is for the benefit of all beings.

The Mahayana has taken many forms, from the Shin-shu and Tendai to the Vajrayana practices of Shingon in Tibetan Buddhism.[fn]Ibid[/fn]

So it is quite widespread.

When we speak of styles of zen as such, daijo zen is traditionally associated with the Rinzai style which concentrates on koan practice and which, at the end, opens into the practice of shikantaza or just sitting. Shikantaza is the starting point within Soto zen practice, which is the practice of our Lineage as Transmitted to us by Dogen zenji.

The fifth kind of zen is Saijojo zen, which means "Great and Perfect Practice." It is great and perfect because it is not based on trying to realize anything, It is based on practising practice. It is based on sitting the sitting. It is based on seeing what you see, hearing what you hear, not looking for Buddha in any way, but simply realizing one's own looking to be Buddha.[fn]Ibid[/fn]

So there you have it,
in brief form,
five styles of zen,
and I encourage you to read through it.

In fact, if it were me,
if I were you,
sitting there looking at the wall,
the first thing I would do when I got out of here is read that
because it can help clarify your understanding
even further.

Twenty minutes well spent.

Now we come to the "Three Aspects of the Teachings",
now what's being talked about here?

Three Aspects of the Teachings,
there's a lot of threes...

There are the "Three Pure Precepts":

*Wrong action does not arise.
There is only the arising of benefit.
There is only the benefit of all beings.*

That's not what they're talking about.

Another set of three, similar:

"Do good,
Avoid evil,
Benefit beings."

Mmmm....

Another three:

“Practice is good at the beginning, at the middle, and at the end.”

No, what’s being talked about here is the Pratyekavada, the Sravakavada, and the Mahayana or the Vast Path, which are approaches to practice.

The Pratyekavada is basically people who might have had realization but either couldn’t or wouldn’t teach.

The Sravakavada, you’ve heard this before, are people who have a “hearsay knowledge of practice”.

The Mahayana is the Vast and Perfect Path.

And again, much has been written about these in other areas,
and you can continue your research and your study
by taking a few minutes and looking into these.

The Pratyekavada is doctrinal and basically the Narrow Path, along with the Sravakavada, and into Hinayana.

The next verse:

*The milk from the Himalayas is pure and rich,
it makes the ghee that I enjoy.*

So here, Yoka daiji is recognizing the contribution that has been made
by many areas and many people
in different parts of the world
from the China
in which he was writing,
and the attribution,
the recognition
that he’s gained a lot
is quite clearly presented.

*One nature pervades all natures.
One thing holds all things.*

Awareness is the Only Condition.

*One moon is reflected in all waters,
all these reflections are one moon.*

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

Have fun today,
and thank you for listening.