

Wherever You Stand 28: Yoka daishi's (Yongjia) Shodoka: Song of Liberation part 17

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Understanding what this precious jewel of mind is
I now transmit it to any who will receive it.

So Yoka daishi,
through his own experience,
through years of studying,
sometimes on his own,
through years of living in hermitage
until finally he met his Teacher,
who confirmed the fact that he had woken up to
the Reality of experiencing,
the understanding of what "this precious jewel of mind",
this precious jewel of bodymind actually is.

Now I mentioned briefly last time
a little statement that was made by Thomas Nagel
a university professor in the Department of Philosophy and the School of Law
at New York University,
the author of "Mortal Questions",
"The View from Nowhere"
"The Last Word"
and other books.

His statement: "Mind, I suspect, is not an inexplicable accident or a divine and anomalous gift but a basic aspect of nature".

So, what we've learned
and what we are practising
is the Reality
that bodymind is how anything at all is experienced
and what you are
and you
and you
what all of us are
are the Knowing of that experiencing.

At the moment of recognizing that Reality,
we can practise basic mindfulness,
feel the breath,
feel the whole bodymind,

until eventually
that practice is who you are
and there is just
this moment
arising and falling
as this bodymind.

The next verse:

*Seeing clearly, there is not one thing,
not man, not Buddha.*

Simplify your practice.
Simplify yourself from struggle, complexity, and fabrication.
Practise this moment itself.

THIS moment.

Whatever arises within this moment:
thoughts,
getting caught up
in thoughts
and feelings,
feeling bad because you got caught up
and think,
well self-image thinks that:
“You shouldn’t have...”

All dharma,
all moments of experience,
all moments to practise,
so it doesn’t matter what the content is,
they’re all dharma,
or moments of experience,
experienced by the bodymind.

You’re the Knowing of them.

At that moment,
practise
the clear seeing
that is self-evident in that moment.

Over time, the tendencies to get caught up,
and to describe ourselves
and limit ourselves and our experiencing

by random and chaotic moments of content,
does wear out.

Questioning with the whole bodymind into this moment
over
and over
and over
and over
and over
and over
again,
one realizes
things as they are.

Your own bodymind,
his own bodymind,
her own bodymind,
is what experiences all dharma,
all moments of experience.

The bodymind,
body and mind
as one seamless moment of experiencing,
and there is a Knowing of each dharma.

At that moment of Knowing,
or Clear Seeing,
or Awareness,
practise!...

...until all tendencies to move toward or away
from moments of experience,
from dharma,
ends,
and there is just Clear Seeing,
just Awareness itself
and you are freed from the bonds
of passion, aggression, and stupidity.

Who wouldn't want that?

Anyone here want that?
The passion, aggression, and stupidity, I'm talking about....
[laughter]

*The worlds of the universe are like froth on the sea,
sages and wise men appear like lightning.*

*Even with a hot iron wheel burning on one's head,
great realized-practice will not be stirred.*

If our practice is true practice,
complete practice,
moment-to-moment practice
with an open heart,
an open mind,
then we are practising with the whole bodymind,
practising with whatever is seen,
whatever is arising,
including expectations
that IF you were "worthy"
IF you were good at this,
then none of the uncomfortable or unsatisfactory feelings and thoughts
would be happening....

They are just part of the display of Awareness itself,
they are not who you are.

When you notice contraction occurring,
recognize that following
or allowing attention to follow
will only breed further contraction.

Just let it go.

It doesn't mean that there is going to be an instant switch
from feeling uncomfortable to a greater or lesser degree
to feeling all pollyannaish:
"This is great! The world's a wonderful place! Everything's so nice..."

Many awful things happen
and they can bite us and make us feel horrible.

The heart can be broken over and over and over again
by things that we see,
things that we experience,
and in that experience can sometimes be things that we do
that we regret.

No problem,
the moment you notice anything,
feel the breath,
feel the whole bodymind,
practise this moment.

Practising the whole moment for just one moment,
and that moment is Buddha.

When your moment-to-moment practice
penetrates all moments,
when the whole bodymind is gyoji,
or continuous practice,
effortlessly,
then at that moment,
all moments are THIS moment,
you will not,
cannot
be moved,
cannot
be stirred.

*Even if demons can cool the sun and heat the moon,
they cannot obstruct the truth of these words.*

Now it can seem as if there are demons sometimes,
you get into states,
get into worry,
get into worry about obsessiveness,
get into obsessiveness about worrying,
of judging and loving and hating...

Now it is interesting that the word "demon"
is often encountered in popular culture
as people deal with the things they are going through.

"She's just dealing with her demons."

That's not so bad,
but we can also recognize that in certain areas,
there's a devastatingly nasty reality to that
when people are treated for their "demons",
they are acted upon by others
with medieval rituals
to help them get rid of their demons,
and often serious injury or even death results from these things.

We're so antiquated...
but even today actual exorcisms are performed.

We're a pretty stupid species
[laughter]

and prone to believe the most unbelievable, unprovable things.

And that's no joke!

It's funny
but it's no joke.

Cause and effect arise moment to moment.
Karma: cause and effect,
is the continual shaping of who and what we are
based on our choices,
based on our localization,
based on our tendency to grasp,
to identify,
to live only part of our lives.

We wind up often severing ourselves into many pieces:
the social self,
the self we are when we are alone,
the bored self,
the hungry self,
the sleeping self,
the dreaming self,
all of these bits and pieces moment to moment.

Cause and effect
are created through and as this grasping
to have a solid and permanent self.

As soon as we see that,
feel the breath,
feel the whole bodymind,
practise that moment of clear seeing
and the tendencies will wear out.

As Anzan Hoshin roshi said,
and I've quoted before:

"If our practice is true practice, complete practice, moment-to-moment practice with an open heart, an open mind, then we are practising with the whole bodymind."

Back to Yoka daishi's verse:

*When an elephant-drawn carriage moves
can a praying mantis block its passing?*

Self-evident.

*Elephants cannot fit into a rabbit's tracks,
enlightenment cannot be circumscribed.*

Don't abuse the ultimate with narrow views.

Now this doesn't mean that you cannot have views, thoughts,
whatever the content,
it's a thought.

There's no instruction given that says:

"don't have thoughts"

but sometimes students have said:

"I'm having thoughts, this isn't working, I don't know how to practise."

Those are thoughts.

Feel the breath, feel the whole bodymind.

Nowhere does it say

"don't have thoughts".

Thoughts are the fuel for practice,

they're dharma,

they fall in with all the other dharma experienced by the bodymind,

seeing,

hearing,

tasting,

touching,

feeling,

smelling,

breathing in and out,

they're the fuel,

they are all the fuel of practice.

When you notice anything

ANY experience of the bodymind whatsoever,

great!

Moment of clear seeing!

Practise at that moment.

The last line from Yoka daishi:

If you are not yet clear, this Song gives the key.

All of this instruction was packed in a doka or song,

"The Song of Liberation"

"The Song of Freedom" by Yoka daishi.

He was born in 665

and died in 713.

He was only 48 years old.

He died in the same year as his Teacher Huineng.

Huineng was the Teacher who recognized

that through years of effort and study,

Yoka daishi had woken up.

He met Huineng and received Transmission,

received confirmation that that was indeed the case.

Yoka daishi became a Tendai monk at eight,

he studied the Teachings, the sutras, the commentaries,

all of which led him to the necessity of actually practising

actually sitting zazen.

He built himself a hermitage,

he practised alone for many years,

practising shi guan, the union of shamata and vipasyana,

and he took up Chan sitting:

zazen.

Yoka daishi took to wandering,

as did many,

he stayed overnight,

met Huineng,

and the Master gave him Transmission.

One night,

one moment of Transmission,

one moment of true entry

based on the moment-to-moment practice

that Yoka daishi had made in hermitage,

walking, reading, meeting various Teachers,

practising,

practising,

moment-to-moment practice

until his practice was

just

this

moment.

He gives it to you now.

Best advice:

keep it simple.

Any time you notice
anything at all,
anything:

feel the breath
feel the whole bodymind

Thank you for listening.