

*A
Staff
for the
Mind*

Kokoro no Tsue

Shodo Harada

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*An old peasant
plucks a flower,
and it's spring
throughout the world*

Yarō hana wo nenzu
bankoku no haru

野老拈花万国春

The source for this phrase is found in the *Records of Rinzaï*: "The pine is green for a thousand years. An old peasant plucks a flower and it's spring throughout the world." The pine tree, even in the coldest season, retains its deep green color. Its color is so consistent that we even call it an evergreen. Since in all seasons it remains green, the pine is used as a

symbol for that which doesn't change. Yet even though its color seems not to change, the tree itself does. It is always evolving and growing; it just doesn't go through the process of dropping old leaves and putting forth new ones as do the deciduous trees with their seasonal greenery.

In the old days, pines were planted on the ridges in the mountains in order to make it clear where the boundary lines were. The sturdy branches of those ancient trees, which have been through so much, give them a sense of gravity and a feeling of long endurance and great stability, even when seen from afar.

These ancient pines: it is not only because they would not make good lumber that they were not cut down. These ancient pines are like old people, growing within the harsh circumstances of all that occurs around them, like the troublesome situations of a challenging life.

People who have lived to a old age say, "One should not get too concerned and bothered about things, but should learn to trust." Not bothering about things does not mean to be without a goal, nor to live casually and half-heartedly. Such people have lived lives with definite demarcations, observing the natural changes clearly and carefully. For the people around them as well, they have shown with their own bodies and actions how to live well.

The Buddha said in the *Dhammapada*:

Always observe this:
For elderly people, what is most
important
is long life, beauty, joy, and
energy.

It is important to emphasize correct manners and good behavior and to live from our natural mind. To those who have ample experience we should give deep respect. But just as important as a long life are beauty, joy, and energy. Many people will respect

one who lives in this way. A long life, which almost everyone wants to have, is something that it is difficult to plan for and that we cannot just decide to bring about. Nevertheless, those who live a long life let others know that to live a long life is possible.

We also aim to realize these four values given by the Buddha. The most important of these is life energy. Even if we have capability and social skills and wisdom and are famous and abundantly rich, in order to be able to make use of all of these we need to live a long life. One who has lived a long time can say from the perspective of ninety years of age: "Those who are fifty, sixty, seventy are snotty-nosed youngsters. Only when you reach eighty does life really begin." A ninety-year-old elder has said these words to encourage his juniors. For him, someone of fifty or sixty is still very raw and green. Only after the age of eighty does one begin to ripen at all.

All of you, if you want to say something about life, work to that point of becoming eighty at least with human's deepest faith. Knowing that from the age of eighty it begins, you can't lose to something smaller. From age eighty it begins! This is how a ninety year old sees it. This brings us the power to say, "I won't lose to anything!" This is the power and energy that the Buddha is talking about.

The Buddha also talks about beauty. As humans get older they may lose physical beauty, but for those who are older, there is a greater inner spiritual beauty. That of course comes not just from living but from going through challenges, letting go of desires, and giving thanks for all things in nature. We change to embrace the greater mind of Buddha and God and to feel gratitude to all things as the grace of the Buddha. We see clearly that that is where everything comes from. From that unceasing gratitude and humility comes the deep, all-embracing human love and compassion of one who has lived a long time. A person like this

does not know selfishness. We know this feeling of gratitude as well just from being in the presence of those who are like this. Living without extra thinking, they function from that clarity and virtue.

Along with this kind of beauty is their joy. We cannot become melancholy as we get older. Having had so much abundant experience should bring us great joy. When in the presence of those who are struggling, we should be able to bring them abundance of spirit and help them realize a quiet, steady security. When we look at an older person's face we don't even need for him to listen to our problems; just by being with him we are soothed. "An old peasant plucks a flower and it's spring throughout the world."

An old person's quiet mind is like spring, and this is the state of mind everyone wants to realize. Buddhism is to trust and believe in people. In old age and eternal life we show respect, not killing without needing to, and not hurrying without needing to. If we are pure and clear in our thoughts and actions, then our life will be one of a person of true virtue and deep character. This person will live for a long time. We will become more and more bright and revealed and our power of the path will be clearer and clearer as we are no longer moved around by anything. Here there is beauty, energy, and joy.

If we hold on to nothing at all, and are not moved around by anything, then we will see that this very body is the body of the Buddha, and there is found spring throughout the world.



*Toy
with flowers
and their fragrance
scents
your garments*

Hana, rō sureba, ko,
E ni mitsu

弄花香満衣

These lines are a continuation of another couplet:

Scoop up water
and the moon is in your hands.
Toy with flowers
and their fragrance scents your
garments.

These couplets come from the records of Master Kido. It is said that when the emperor Saga (786-842) saw a wild chrysanthemum in his garden and offered it to the Buddha, this was the origin of flower arranging (*ikebana*). Another famous emperor who lived from 513 to 553 was reigning when for the first time a Buddha statue and sutra books were brought from Korea to Japan. We can trace Buddhism in Japan back this far. When the emperor saw what the king of Korea had sent, he was so impressed that he asked the royal messengers if he should make an offering to the statue and how to display it. This was the first Buddha statue to come to Japan.

The emperor was so astonished at the old peaceful statue because it had been made by an excellent craftsman who created it with burning deep faith, working with reverence and great respect. When people stood in front of it, they could feel this reverence and respect. Those who create great music and works of art guide people naturally to the religious world with their creations. What they create is always peaceful and always fresh. This is a peace that is beyond all conflict and friction, a peace that is not found in the day-to-day world of people. It is a splendid, clear, and pure state, and people have to *gassho* to it; they cannot help but honor it with the deepest respect.

What is it that is being expressed in this type of creation? That splendid wonderful thing which cannot be found in the usual world around us, what is that? Is there another world from which it comes? No. People cannot make things that are not in their mind. What is being expressed is from humans' highest state of mind. It is the depth of the profoundest truth that gives birth to true peace. Through these consummate creations people are able to know this state of mind and its world of prayer. It is this high level of human character that is called *Buddha*.

In the words of Zen it is said, "In all the boundless realms of space not a single hair can be inserted. From the ancient past through to the limitless future we are never separated from this very moment." This is where that which is looking and that which is being looked at come together as one; this is the true joy of the Dharma. This state of mind knows no obstructions.

Of course all beings are unified in this Great Mind, as is all time, the past, future, and present, as well as all of the Buddhas and Patriarchs. We are also one with the great joy of the abundant Dharma, this gratitude and joy and that which we today feel like offering; this is the samadhi of delightful play beyond time and space. There is no joy beyond this endless Dharma joy, and this realm is what forgives everything.

When we offer the Buddha a flower, light, and tea, this is the mandala of no self and other, an offering to that splendid dignified One Self of no separation, that to which we prostrate spontaneously, that oneness of samadhi. That flower we offer to the Buddha is always showing its back to the Buddha while showing to us its beautiful, living face. In this way all beings are one living body. This is the natural expression of our true Mind.

The sound of the Gion Shoja bells
Echoes the impermanence of all things;
The color of the sala flowers
Reveals the truth that the prosperous must decline.

So it is written in the *Heiki monogatari*; after living for only one or two days, this sala flower dies, showing the transience of life. In this flower we find eternal joy and the life of the Buddha as well. This flower, whose fragrance scents our garments when we toy with it, is also this abundant Mind.



*When
the spring wind
blows,
everything grows
again*

Shunpū fuite mata
shōzu

春風吹又生

The ancient poet Hakuraku wrote a poem that, in a rough translation, tells how, even though the abundantly growing green grasses and herbs will dry up and turn brown and fade away, they will always grow back again. The fields are burned brown, but when the spring wind blows, they all grow again.

That everything that is born,
will die, this is the Dharma.
When we are completely freed
from this,
We will know the ease of true
serenity.

In these lines we have the essence of
the Buddha's teaching. Because in
our awareness we have dualistic ideas
about living and dying, our confusion
is born. If we see the truth about the
cycle of the grasses that burn and
come up again, and see it clearly, we
can know that the temporary world of
birth and death is, as it is, the eternal
world as well. But this cannot be truly
awakened to through only a mental
understanding.

Extinguish the flames of greed.
Extinguish the flames of
ignorance.
Extinguish the flames of anger.
This is Nirvana.

This is what the Buddha taught and
experienced. But we have to once let
go of all of our piled-up thoughts of
things as good or bad, not pushing
that kind of judgment on everything
that we see and experience. We must
also let go of all of those experiences
that are held on to and become
attachments, let go of our collection
of negative thoughts and ideas, those
deep attachments that are always
flickering and keeping that greed
and anger alive. We must constantly
work to cut away the attachments of
intensely grasping love and hate, as
Shinran Shonin has said. They arise
from being tantalized by the blind
thinking of the ego. If we live in the
deep-rooted, twisted awareness that
the ego supports, we are always
thinking, "Is it like this, is it like that?
Shouldn't it be like this, shouldn't it be
like that?"

Instead of being always turned around
by thoughts, we must burn them,
like so many weeds and grasses. If
we can thoroughly burn up all of
our past conditioning and collected
experiences and education, we can

know the mind of a baby that holds
on to nothing whatsoever. If we can
replace our suffering mind with this,
then we can know that place where
inside and outside are one. From there
comes forth the intensely bright new
life energy of the green grasses being
reborn from those black ashes. That
fresh birth is not moved around by
our attachments to the past; instead,
being simply with the actuality of each
experience, living in each and every
breath and each and every second,
our being alive is manifested. With
the bright shining energy of the truth
of being alive we live with nothing to
stop us.

In this way the Zen phrases expressed
in the words of the poets give life
to the truly subtle flavor of humans'
truth.



*Mountain flowers
smile,
wild birds
twitter*

Sanka warai
Yachō kataru

山花咲野鳥語

A long winter is over, and the sun's
rays are shining longer with each
day, and becoming warmer day by
day. The wind is also getting warmer,
and there are new buds on the willow
trees. The pink plums and the white
plums are blooming. Cherry blossoms
and peach flowers as well as apricot
flowers are blooming everywhere, as
the green willows draw sharp lines

among them.

As an old song goes, "The willow trees and the cherry blossoms are all coming out together. Seeing this the whole capital becomes spring."

It is a season when we feel as if everything is perfect, exactly as it is--right here is perfection; we are completely melted into oneness with the heavens.

It is spring!

We forget all of our problems, all of our sadness, all of our grief. We don't get angry, and we don't get melancholy. We and the heavens together are all the spring scenery. We truly know that this very place is the Land of Lotuses. The thousand trees nearby, the thousand trees farther away, and then the thousands of trees very far away: no matter how far we look we see flowering trees and more flowering trees in every direction. The flowers are in full bloom everywhere, and the meadowlark can be heard warbling among them. The bees are looking for pollen and the birds are looking for insects, and it is all interwoven.

Becoming the flowers, we bloom; becoming the birds, we sing. We lose track of whether we are the bird or the bird is us; all distinctions drop away. If our mind opens completely and we pierce through the bottom of the ego, then there is nothing throughout the heavens and the earth that we need to seek. This body as it is, is the Buddha. When we can receive this it is not just that the form of everything is the scenery of spring. When the Buddha saw the morning star he was awakened to his clear original nature. When Kyogen threw the rubble he had gathered into the bamboo grove and a piece of tile hit the bamboo and made a loud sound, upon hearing that sound he was enlightened. Hakuin heard the sound of the morning bell and was enlightened. These are all everyday moments. In the midst of living our ordinary lives, who knows when or where we will encounter the great radiance of Buddha nature? Sweeping the garden we ask, "What is

this?" Eating our food we ask, "What is this?" Prostrating to everything we ask, "What is this?" This is our living, vivid energy. We creatively continue without letting go, and we don't know what it will be that will bring this great sudden amazement and wonder.

The enlightenment poem of Emperor Hanazono expresses well his awakened state of mind. It tells how during twenty years he has faced his true mind, all day long working on his practice diligently, and that now those efforts have brought today's spring. For the first time he has realized the fulfillment of all those efforts. With this he has a great inner spring, and in everything he encounters he sees that it is all as usual. The scenery is the same as always, but his mind is spring. Everything he sees and hears, all of it is spring. When cold, we put on some more clothing; when hot, we take off some clothes; when hungry, we eat. Everything we do is the same as it always has been, yet each and every moment is fresh and new. In our mind there is not one stuck place nor any confusion. The Emperor Hanazono was able to encounter this True Spring. We know well the external form of spring and we receive it and send it off again, but we have to meet the True Spring of our deepest mind.



*A bird calls,
and the mountain
is quieter still*

Tori naite yama sara
ni shizuka nari

鳥鳴山更幽

The wind quiets,
and the flowers fall.
A bird calls,
and the mountain
is quieter still.

These lines are found in the fifth section of Hakuin's *Kaian Kokugo*. Ganto Zenkatsu Osho lived from 828 to 887 and received Tokusan's lineage along with Seppo.

One day a monk came to visit and Ganto asked him, "From where have you come?"

The monk answered, "From the western capital."

Ganto said, "After the rebellion of Koso had been suppressed, did you get the sword?"

The monk answered, "Yes, I have taken the sword."

Ganto stretched out his neck before the monk and let forth a great yell.

The monk said, "Your head has fallen!"

Ganto laughed loudly.

This was at a time when things were in great turmoil. Koso, who was once a salt seller, was the leader of a rebellious faction. It was said that a sword fell from Heaven bearing the inscription, "This sword is given from the Heavens to Koso." Koso seized power, causing Emperor Kiso to flee the capital. When his rule became uncertain, Koso used the sword to harmonize the society. Four years later he was killed by a member of his own family.

This koan took place following those events. Ganto was asking about that round perfection that each and every person is born with. How about you? Do you have this deeply seeing eye? If you do, then do you have the sharp wisdom that can use that sword thoroughly? He was giving the monk a chance to answer that.

When the monk replied, "Yes, I have taken the sword," he was caught in Ganto's trap. Of course this sword is not something you can take; saying that, the monk proved that he was speaking from ideas and not from actuality.

Hearing this, Ganto then put out his

neck and gave a great shout. With that great shout he took away the monk's extraneous thinking about a sword. It must have been from a place of great sadness that the monk answered, "Your head has fallen!"

Our true inner sword is not something with which we cut a physical neck. The monk was pulled and pushed around by Ganto's words and fell right smack into the trap Ganto laid for him. Saying that he had taken a sword that does not exist and then saying that he could use that sword, he was completely deluded.

To be able to realize that great sword means that we can cut away all love and hate, all ideas of good and bad, darkness, misery, and gladness. All of those opposites, those double heads, are cut away completely. When this mind is cut away so completely that we are no longer confused by and tangled up in anything, when our life opens completely, this is the true sword.

The monk was so stupid that he did not even realize he had cut his own throat. He was a pitiful example, and seeing this Ganto laughed out loud. But did the monk perhaps mistakenly take this laughter for confirmation? He left and went to Seppo and told him the story. Then Seppo asked him, "Please show me this head of Ganto that you have cut off."

Seppo asked the monk this to show him that he had fallen into conceptual thinking, that there was no meaning to his story. Then for the first time the monk hesitated, and Seppo hit him again and again, thirty times, and kicked him out.

The wind quiets,
and the flowers fall.
A bird calls,
and the mountain is quieter
still.

One big wind gust blows, and immediately afterward the branches and trees and flowers that had been

blown around are suddenly still, and in that the birds become quiet and the flower blossoms' falling can be heard and felt even more sharply and clearly. The quiet in the mountains is beyond the imagination of one who lives in the city. This silence goes to the most profound place of our heart. This serenity is broken by one bird's calling, and then we again feel an even greater serenity.

Seppo rarely hit anyone. He wanted to do something to liberate this monk, and it was this kindness that led him to hit him so relentlessly. He saw how much the monk was being pulled around by words. Only when he received those thirty blows could the monk suddenly understand why Ganto had laughed. He realized he had fallen into his trap. But Ganto was not laughing only at this monk. Unmon also laughed loudly at all of those who, without honestly and completely dying, walk around talking as if they have experienced that. Ganto laughed at all the monks in the world to lead them to that great peace.



*After rain,
the green mountains
are even greener*

U go no seizan sei
utata sei

雨後青山青轉青

On a bright, clear day in May, Bucho Zenji's mind was invited by a wonderful spring breeze, and he went to visit the hermitage of the poet Basho in Fukugawa in Edo. Basho was watching for his good friend's arrival; he had recently been inclined to hibernate and had not gone out for a long time. He had told Master Bucho that he would like to have a formal meeting

with him and have sanzen. When he tugged at Bucho Zenji's foot even just a little in this way, the Zen master flew to the occasion. The two of them met and smiled broadly at each other.

Well, what have you realized? What did you see? The Zen master could see it right away. This was an immediate exchange of Mind between them.

Their exchange began with Bucho Zenji saying, "So what have you realized? How about it? Something has been gone through, what is it?"

To this Basho answered, "The rain has finished and the mountains are greener than ever. This brilliantly green moss—it is so bright! After the rains pass the moss is even greener than before!"

Of course Bucho Zenji would not accept just that. He asked, "What is the Buddhadharma prior to that bright green moss?"

What is the state of mind prior to any awareness or sense perception of that green moss? Bucho Zenji was asking about that pure transparent source of awareness. He was asking for that place before heavens and earth are divided into two. How about that moss before God even imagined the heavens and earth? If we say it a different way: before there is any division into good or bad, heaven or earth, before there is any dualism in our awareness, before there arises even one single mind moment, how about that?

The source of the universe, the actual substance of awareness, what is it? What is that? This is what he was asking. We often hear the words emptiness and void, and these are often interpreted as meaning "nothing whatsoever." People often misunderstand the state of mind of zazen as this. This is called nihilism or the trap of the deep, dark cave of the foxes. As Daito Kokushi said "For thirty years or so I, too, dwelled in the fox's cave, No wonder people still get bewitched."

Bucho Zenji was making certain this point was not being missed. An answer came flying back correctly and without hesitation.

Jumping into the river,
the sound of water.

Something had broken the stillness, plop, jumping into the water. Most likely it was a frog, and this "plop" filled the ears prior to any division into heaven and earth, prior to any division into dualism in our awareness. Basho expressed clearly what the Buddhadharma was, prior to the green moss. That place without any preconceived notions, found in this very moment's immediate encounter. This is that pure awareness.

"Yes, that's it! That's it!"

Bucho verified that Basho had not fallen into the trap of nihilism and that this was the clearest place of fresh wonder; he had realized the truth. He received Basho's state of mind well and gave him Dharma transmission.

"Our mind is, as it is, the whole universe. The whole universe, as it is, is our Mind." With a calligraphy of these words, and the sanzen stick or nyoi, Buchu passed the Dharma to Basho, and from this came, it is said, the famous poem:

Into the old pond
the frog jumps
plop.



*A
faint wind
stirs
the dark pines*

Bifū yūshō o fuki

微風吹幽松

This line is from a poem by Kanzan. In a zen dojo we rise at three and then have sutras and zazen and eat gruel; through the day we do samu and takuhatsu, and then in the evening zazen. When zazen is over we sit late into the night on our own. Doing sanzen at dawn and at dusk, we realize those teachings of the ancients. We do the koans and clarify our mind.

Every single time there is sanzen, we dive into our teacher's room, and those extraneous thoughts and blind ideas are scraped away. Like a fool, like an idiot, we return our mind to its original emptiness. This is the path of the Buddha.

Most people think that to cultivate our ego brings success and good fortune; to cultivate the ego and be definite in our own egoistic ideas is what most people believe we should do. Believing that the more knowledge one has the more valuable one is, we look for something beyond imagination.

Nevertheless, to carry around memories about what things were like three years ago, and what they were like ten years ago, is a big mistake. This is a very unhealthy state of mind. Only when we throw away all of that and let go of everything that has happened in the past can we live every single day with a fresh and new state of mind. Isn't this, after all, humans' truth?

In the Tang dynasty in China, two eccentrics, Kanzan and Jittoku, lived on a mountain named Tendai. One day Priest Bukkan of Tendai Mountain's temple, Kokuseiji, saw a person who looked like a beggar. He brought this very simple man to the temple and named him Jittoku. Jittoku did many chores and helped out around the temple. His friend Kanzan lived on the mountain, and when Kanzan was hungry he would come down to the temple, where Jittoku would have collected the leftovers from the day and saved them for him in a bamboo container. When Kanzan was finished eating, he and Jittoku would have a great conversation, every word deep and profound and all in accordance with the Way.

The poet Rokyū-in overheard their conversations one day and was very interested in meeting them, so he went to call on Kokuseiji. Kanzan and Jittoku were talking in the entrance to the kitchen, but when they saw Priest Bukkan and the poet approaching, they joined hands and disappeared

into the mountains. They never came back, it is said.

Later that place where Kanzan lived, called Kangan, was sought, but all that was found was one set of poems written on a rock. Rokyū-in gathered those poems and added an introduction, and this collection is called Cold Mountain. Kanzan always wrote of his own state of mind,

a faint wind stirs dark pines
come closer the sound gets
better

Constantly reading the teachings of Lao-tzu, Kanzan and Jittoku continued to live in the way of the ancients; "ten years unable to return, he forgot the way he came." It has been so long since I have been on the path of the world that I have forgotten the way back. If you want to know this place free from all the pain and suffering of the world, it is right here in this deep mountain. In this way Kanzan wrote.

Of course he was not writing about the deep mountain, isolated from the world, in a literal sense. There is a world of quiet that cannot be heard. Kanzan is the cold mountain in the mind of each of us where there is no sound whatsoever. In this quiet mountain's depths there is a slight wind that moves the pines. It can barely be heard, and that faintest sound of the pines is so poignant; the deep quiet that resonates is beyond description. There is no other sound there. And at the foot of that old pine sits an old man with a long white beard, reading the ancients and the words of Lao-tzu. He is reading the works of that far-reaching mind where all is equal. And who is that? It is Kanzan himself.

滅却心頭火自涼

*When you
have extinguished
the mind,
even fire is cool*

Shintō o mekkyaku
sureba hi onozukara
suzushi

滅却心頭火自涼

This poem is from To Junkaku's collection, which also includes these lines:

Closing the temple's gate in the
hottest days of summer,
and putting on the robes, to sit
zazen.

At this temple there had never been
any cool shade from pine trees, nor
any bamboo grove. But we don't need

a cool, shady environment in which to
do zazen.

When you have extinguished
the mind,
even fire is cool.

When we go beyond our dualistic
thinking, then we can receive even the
hottest weather, so hot that it feels like
fire, like a cool breeze.

A monk came to visit Master Tozan
Gohon Zenji. He asked, "What is the
way of looking at the ultimate edge of
life and death? This heat is unbearable!
How can we resolve this torturous hot
and cold?"

The Master responded, "Why don't
you go where there is no hot and no
cold?" That place of no birth and no
death. Go there right now!

The monk then answered, "This place
of feeling nothing--where is it?"

"You have to kill all of the dualistic
feelings of 'hot!' or 'cold!' You have to
let go completely of even the slightest
sense of hot and cold. Cut away that
dualistic perception!"

When living, live completely!
When dying, die completely!

This is the state of mind described in
these lines:

When you have extinguished
the mind,
even fire is cool.

National Teacher Kaisen, or Kaisen
Kokushi, about whom we know
little except that he died in 1582,
received his title from Takeda Shingen,
who then sent him to the temple of
Eirinji. Eirinji is a great temple of the
Myoshinji sect, and many disciples
were raised there. Muso Kokushi was
also karmically affiliated to this temple.
After the wars, as things always cycle,
as things grow and decay, the son of
Takeda Shingen, Katsuyori, did not
have the same strong ki as his father.
He lost to Odu Nobunaga's soldiers

but escaped to Eirinji, where he and
those who ran away with him were
all accepted by Kaisen Kokushi. Later
Odu Nobunaga's great anger reached
to Eirinji as well, and every building in
the temple was burned down.

When attacked, Kaisen Kokushi and
the monks who were living and
training at Eirinji all crammed into
the mountain gate. As that great fire
burned, Kaisen Kokushi had them all
read the Suramgama Sutra together.
As the flames rose and their robes
caught on fire and then their bodies
began to burn, they knew the end was
at hand and all spoke their last words,
telling of their feelings about death.

When you have extinguished
the mind,
even fire is cool.

To Junkaku's poem was also read at
that time as the burning samadhi was
entered.

There were three monks of
great ower of path who had been
able to get away. Because three had
escaped, the Dharma was prevented
from being destroyed. The Buddha's
Dharma could not be allowed to be
destroyed.

When you have extinguished
the mind,
even fire is cool.

Our mind has a quiet, deep stillness,
a stillness so profound that no
happiness, sadness, or joy can reach
there. To know this great depth is
what is called to be in Nirvana.

Extinguish the flames of anger.
Extinguish the flames of greed.
Extinguish the flames of
ignorance.

The way of liberation from all pain and
suffering is to extinguish these flames,
and here is the true way of liberation
of the Buddhadharma.



*Lotus leaves
are round,
rounder than
a mirror*

Kayō dandan kagami
yori mo madoka nari

荷葉團團似鏡

These words are found in the records of Daie. Daie's teacher, Engo Zenji, the editor of the Blue Cliff Records, gave this name to his works after seeing the words framed in the quarters of Master Kassan Zenne Zenji.

Once a monk asked this same Kassan Zenne Zenji, "What is it that looks like Buddha Nature?"

In answer, Kassan Zenne spoke these words,

Lotus leaves are round,
rounder than a mirror.

The lotus is commonly used to represent Buddhism, and lotuses are often found offered on Buddhist altars. The Lotus Sutra is considered to be the king of all sutras. To symbolize the subtle mysterious Dharma, a lotus is chosen. When the Buddha taught the Buddhadharma, the lotus represented the center of his teaching, as it often does the center of the teachings of Mahayana Buddhism.

In the Vimalakirti Sutra it is said, "the lotus, born of mud, is not tainted thereby." The lotus is not found blooming in the pure air of a mountaintop, and neither is it found in a dry place with clean water. It does not need a clear, clean place to bloom but blossoms in a muddy, dirty place. Yet on that flower there is not a single drop of mud or speck of dirt. It has this kind of purity and clarity. At the same time that it blooms, its fruit is already produced. It does not finish flowering before producing its fruit. This is also just like Buddhism. We do not need a pure, clear location to discover enlightenment, nor do we have to cut our desires completely away first. Right here within the mud of our desires, we find the blooming of the flower of enlightenment. Right within our delusions, amid our impurities, we find our heart opening and our mind awakening.

If we give rise to our Bodhisattva vow then our fruit of becoming Buddha is guaranteed. This is a way of expressing the deep truth of Mahayana Buddhism. The Buddha's round, huge, perfect mind of no corners and no edges is expressed by the big round lotus leaves.

This poem is a couplet with:

Water chestnut horns are
sharp,
sharper even than a gimlet.

Water chestnuts also grow in the water, but they have small flowers and jagged leaves and sharp thorn-covered

fruit that cuts your fingers. Although the lotus leaves and the water chestnut leaves are very different, even opposite, that does not mean that one is good and one is bad.

Although we say that the Buddha had a round great mind, this does not mean that he was always smiling. He was also very strict with his disciples. Today we are so focused on moving in accordance with our small, self-centered ego that our way of looking at life is very narrow and unclear. We spend our whole life looking only for what strengthens our ego and brings us good fortune. This is true of the majority of people today.

This ego is transient; it is only borrowed and not fixed and real. It exists in reactions and judgments, not in something that is real and substantial, which means we end up living lives based on that which is empty and unsubstantial. When the Buddha entered Nirvana he said to his disciple Ananda, "Take refuge in your self; take refuge in the Dharma. Don't take refuge in external things and other people."

That which he is telling Ananda to take refuge in is not his ego--but then what is it? What is he saying can be found inside of us in which we can take refuge? This is an important question. It is what the monk was asking when he said, "What is it that looks like Buddha Nature?"

Zen is the flow of the Mind. This mind of no shape or form at all, this formless mind, is what is being asked about.

Lotus leaves are round,
rounder than a mirror.
Water chestnut horns are
sharp,
sharper even than a gimlet.

The subjective is only subjective in relationship to the objective; originally there is no separation. This is the way of Buddhism. Without subject, there is no object; without object, there is no

subject. The world and I are not two, not separate. Realizing that huge, absolute one and that true center, awakening to it, is the ground of the wisdom of Zen. From the point of view of this wisdom the objective and subjective are not two. Because these are both present, there is a self that is seeing and a world that is being seen. When we can see this clearly and know the true responsibility of each and every one of us, from there our capacity and abilities are given life.

As Tozan Zenji says, "You are me but I am also not you." This is the absolute free mind being awakened to. This is where subjective and objective are one. When we see the lotus leaves, we are the lotus leaves; when we see the water chestnuts, we are the water chestnuts. We hear the birds chirping, and we are the birds; everything is us, and there is no separation.

Yet we are not everything. We are beyond everything; we have created it all. And so we are sometimes round and perfect, sometimes strict and severe. We are free to give life and to negate it as well. This is where humans' dignified, deep life energy is. Yet while this deep life energy is in each of us, it does not mean doing whatever we feel like. Rather, it means living with compassion for all people, in a way that gives life to all others and our own freedom simultaneously. We have to understand this subtle interaction of all things, or it is not the true Buddhadharma.



*South village,
north village,
they're plowing
after a rain*

Nanson hokuson ame
ichiri

南村北村雨一犁

This poem is from Kozan Kokushi's long collection.

South village, north village,
they're plowing after a rain

In the south and north, everywhere you look in the wide-open countryside of the peninsula, there are rice fields. From morning to night, not wasting a moment to take a rest, everyone is working as hard as they can. The men are working the oxen, giving them plenty of whip in order not to waste a precious moment of work time. The sound of oxen can be heard, and the women divide into groups to make the meals or to prepare for the hulling of the rice. The children pick up the dried oxen pies, and the old people care for the toddlers in the shade of the big tree.

South village, north village,
they're plowing after a rain.

From far away the rain approaches, the billowing stormclouds dropping water that turns the recently plowed furrows dark brown. This is called a blessed rain and is an important part of the planting cycles. Then the rainfall becomes stronger and everyone runs under the branches of the big tree.

At noon in the kitchen, a young bride brings the lunch and gives it to her mother-in-law, and the father-in-law chews some food to feed to their very young grandson. Without any attachment, each person does what is there to be done. This is the source of peace.

A poet of the eleventh century, Kotei Ken, was also given the name Kozan Koku. Spiritually, Kotei Ken was very much influenced by the Patriarchs from the Oryo line; Oryo's student was Master Maida Soshin (1025-1100), and Master Shishin Goshin (1044-1115) was his student.

With this Zen master, Shishin Goshin, the poet Kotei Ken did sanzen and was instantly able to realize a profound state of mind. When Kotei Ken was doing sanzen he asked about the path, "From where can it be entered?"

Kotei Ken looked at the garden fence, where the mokusei flower was

releasing its fragrance. "Can you smell that?"

"Yes, I can smell it."

"Well, then, enter from there." Shishin Goshin taught him in this way.

The poet Sankoku wrote a poem about how humans' value comes forth from endurance and hard times, which then give us freedom, but Kotei Ken said it is not so difficult.

South village, north village,
they're plowing after a rain.

Knowing the great life living in us at this very moment is not about being praised by others or about being called a good person. Knowing this energy that lives through us this very moment brings us joy in everything we do. Raising children also polishes the parents and brings them joy.

It is joyful to clean the house; just wiping the glass in the windows is our joy, our daily life's full tautness. In life there is a joy of children that only children can know, and a joy of a young person that only a young person can know. There is also a joy that can only be known by separating from everything, for only then can we know the true joy of simply being alive.

Our training is not about doing something difficult to become something special. Chanting sutras, doing prostrations, doing samu, we receive this very moment, and for that we have eternal gratitude. To live in this way is called the Buddha's practice; in every single thing we do, we find Buddha. Being born with a human's life energy, we have so much to be grateful for. In knowing that we are alive today, we can find that greatest grace and joy.

This also gives us the courage to go even more deeply into our wisdom. We pray that we will not give in to the weakness of grumbling and complaining. We ask to be protected

from going into our places of weakness.

The children pick up the dried oxen pies, and the old people care for the toddlers in the shade of the big tree. Every footstep, every hand motion, is the living life energy.

This mistaken me who hangs on to mistaken ways of looking at things, please give me the power to see clearly and to act with integrity. This is our great prayer. We pray not just not to be poor, but to be able to know how to make the efforts we need to make in order not to be poor.

We pray not to be afraid of being sick, and we pray not to let our sickness turn us into a grumbling, irascible person. We pray that we can pray for peace and work on our mind in peace even when we are sick. We do this because we believe in the wisdom that we have all been born with. Because of this wisdom, we can give life to and honor all living beings

秋露芙蓉渠滴

*Autumn
dewdrops glisten
on the lotuses*

Shūro no fukyo ni
shitataru

秋露芙蓉渠滴

Fukyo is a dried lotus, also called *shigurei*. In the freezing scenery of late fall, rain mixed with sleet falls on its leaves, brown and drooping.

The teacher of the great tea master Rikyu, Takeno Joo, in order to express the state of mind of “wabi,” would use these lines by the famous poet Teika Fujiwara:

All around, no flowers in bloom,
Nor brilliant maple leaves,
Solitary, a fisherman’s hut
On the twilight shore
Of this autumn eve.

In this way he expressed the state of mind of the serenity of Nirvana. Everywhere we look, all of the magnificent flowers of spring are gone, and all of the brilliant colors of the autumn are no more to be seen. There is only a wind from the sea, a chilly wind mixed with snow, bringing a freshness to this place of no scenery whatsoever. That fisherman’s hut is blown through by this chill wind. This lonely, melancholy state of mind, as the sun is setting and the day is dimming, with everything that was glorious gone, with every last leaf fallen away, this world completely naked of any scenery whatsoever is what Fujiwara was writing about.

In this poem we can find the source of the tea ceremony and even the source of the human Mind. This is also the serene state of mind of Nirvana. During the era of the wars, the samurai would live with death as their main fulcrum point. Always acutely aware that they might not be alive tomorrow, they would come into the tea room and sit quietly. They would listen to the sound of the tea kettle boiling, like the sound of the wind in the pines. One can imagine that the sound of the boiling water would settle their minds, and the serene ambience would wash them clean. It was within this context that Takeno Joo used this poem in teaching Rikyu.

We have to touch the source point of the matter of life and death. We humans have deep emotions,

but we lose our deepest root if we don’t realize this eternal, quiet, and profound depth. And from this root we eternally receive life energy. In the tea ceremony this is called *wabi* and *sabi*. This is the stillness of Nirvana. When the Buddha entered parinirvana, everything was burned up and finished, extinguished and turned into an ashlike quiet. The flames of greed were burned completely, the sparks of anger were quieted, and the agitation of the flames of ignorance was gone. Not one mind moment of attachment, love, hate, or jealousy remained, only serenity as it is, full and taut.

This is the mind of “Autumn dewdrops glisten on the lotuses.” This is the place where everything is stilled, everything in our awareness is gone, nothing is left behind at all. If we don’t taste the flavor of this, then that which we experience in our everyday life, all of our emotions, will be without any firm rootedness.

First I went out following the
sweet-smelling grasses.
Now I return chasing the falling
leaves home.

This poem is from the works of Chosha no Keishin, who died in 868. Chosha no Keishin received transmission from Nansen Fugan Zenji.

Once Chosha spent an entire night talking with Master Kyozan of the Igyo Sect. Pointing toward the moon, Kyozan said, “Everyone has This, but how rarely can anyone use it.” He spoke as if he were thinking out loud.

Hearing this, Chosha thought, “This is a perfect chance.” He demanded: “Show me how you would use it?”

Kyozan countered, “No, I want to see you use it.”

Chosha did use it, immediately kicking Kyozan and then throwing him down on the ground.

When Kyozan finally got up, feeling dizzy and nauseous, he said, “How

rough he is, like a big tiger!”

Ever since that time Chosha no Keishin has been called the great tiger.

Chosha no Keishin lived in Konan in China, near the southeastern part of Lake Dotei, where he founded the temple Rokunji. The scenery there, which includes the source of the river Shoko, is very well known. Chosha lived in this place where the scenery is so beautiful, and everything he said was, like the scenery, beautifully put. He was versed also in the teaching of the *Flower Garland Sutra*. A rare and exemplary person of Zen, he was a true scholar who wrote profound works. Rokuonji was the name of the temple of which he was the founder.

One day when Chosha returned from a walk, the head monk met him and asked him where he had gone.

“I just went out wandering to the back mountain,” he answered vaguely.

“You went to play in the mountain, but where? Which mountain?” the monk asked again. “Tell us clearly,” he demanded, very strictly.

Chosha then answered, “I went to look for wildflowers, and then finding so many flowers here and there, I continued following them.”

These are the words of a true master in life. Because we feel that that goal which is we hold clearly in both life and training is still not completely realized, we play in the samadhi of delight. When the society is stable and balanced, when the welfare of all has been looked after, then only playing remains to be done.

It’s important to make effort in life, but to what end do we work so hard? What is the ultimate point? There has to be some ultimate point, or it becomes struggle and nothing else. If our joy as humans cannot come forth through art or music or drama or mountain climbing or sports--it doesn’t matter--there is no meaning in being alive.

But within this play a very high ideal has to be manifested and enjoyed. Humans’ true value is found here. It’s not just playing at any old thing that’s the point. What is this ultimate play? This is the pure land or paradise, this world which humans seek, this great abundant mind--this is what is most important, and this is where religion comes in. This world where there are no conflicts or obstacles: here we know joy and fullness every day.

In this reality full of contradictions, we can’t leave everything behind and go somewhere else; we can’t throw it all away and go to some conceptual paradise or ideal place called a pure land. Instead, we have to be right within this reality and, within it, just as it is, to play and enjoy ourselves. This is religion. We must know the place where our desires are, as they are, our enlightenment, where life and death, as they are, are Nirvana. Rinzai called it, “While still being on the way to never have left home.” Or it is said that Kanzeon called it, “To play freely and limitlessly with all of the supernatural powers in the world of all deluded beings.” The realization of this place is what is being talked about. This is not about realizing some conceptualized pure land or conceptualized paradise. To be challenged and struggle on behalf of liberating others is our joy. This is our play.

Chosha’s state of mind is free of attachment, remaining in this eternal present. This high-level state of mind is called the advanced practice, the advanced state of mind--this is what is expressed here. We have to know this for ourselves, this pure land in this very world, and live it directly.

But if it ends here, it is still conceptual and separated from reality, still only a temporal state of mind.

This is what the monk was asking, and how important his question was, telling Chosha, “Now be careful of your footsteps! Watch where you walk!”

Then Chosha said, “First I went out following the sweet-smelling grasses. Now I return chasing the falling leaves home.” He was in the midst of a teeming spring, but he had pierced through that to the serenity of watching his footsteps clearly.

This is where we have to open our eyes in order to give life to this phrase. If we get stopped or stagnant we lose this pure joy, but if we just stay in the world of humans’ emotions we will only seek pleasure without knowing true joy. We have to see that the joy of spring is, as it is, the serenity of extinction found in the autumn. This is the world Chosha was expressing when he said, “First I went out following the sweet-smelling grasses. Now I return chasing the falling leaves home.” This is the world of the samadhi of deep play.

江
月
照
松
風
吹

*The moon
on the river shines,
the wind
in the pines murmurs*

Kōgetsu terashite,
shōfū fuku

江月照松風吹

These words are from Yokka Shinkaku
Zenji's *Song of Enlightenment*.

The moon on the river shines,
the wind in the pines murmurs
What is there to do on a long
pleasant night?

Let's respect all humanity; let's respect

each individual; let's awaken to that which is beyond ego! Let's make this joy part of each and every person's life--this is what it is for, without mistake. I am not being moved by some absolute power and living in an unawakened way. There could be nothing sadder than to think we are ruled by some ideological or heavenly cosmic power. We have to respect each other and recognize our differences. It is our very nature to not be stuck on anything, to be at one with the heavens and the earth, this great life energy that can embrace all of existence; we must awaken to this great, all-embracing mind.

Our respect for all people has to come from that root source. But respecting all humans does not mean that we should respect whatever anyone does, or that it is okay to do anything we want. It is very easy to fall into this kind of a conceited trap. Respecting each other's character means that we don't push our own desires for each other on to each other. It doesn't mean to look to each others' ego so that it's okay to do whatever we like--that gives birth to a great mistaken understanding. To clearly see the root of the ego, the root of that which is respected in each person, and realize its essence is what is called religious experience.

To have this kind of experience is life's true goal; that each and every person should realize True Mind directly is Zen. Zen is the flow of Mind, and Mind is the body of Zen. We become one with that god who creates the heavens, and as one we create all things and awaken to that. For doing this we throw away all of our desires and realize this mind of not being moved around by our emotions and needs. If we conduct ourselves only from our desires and needs, then we can't call ourselves the master of all situations. We have to decide that we won't give our all attention to manners and customs of the world; instead we will be like the chill, severe moon shining with great radiance, that just this one person sitting here is of great importance.

Instead of thinking about yesterday or tomorrow, becoming that one person who fills the heavens and the earth as we sit is zazen. Eventually we go into busy cities, and while we sit we can fill the cities as well, but to do zazen is to have nothing in our minds at all and melt into that space. When that small self disappears completely, we don't know: Is the space me? Am I the space? There is only that bright moon shining in the sky; our body is blown through by the wind in the pines.

Does the moon in the sky shine us, or are we the moon in the sky, shining? We can't tell the difference. This is the mind in which the wind of the pines and I are one and the same, filling the heavens and the earth. When we experience this, then for the first time we know the truth of being human. Our body melts into all space, and our state of mind is like a bottomless lake in which we find endless serenity. The world is boundlessly transparent and extends infinitely in all directions. In this state of mind time is not a concept. It is the eternal now.

"This very place is the land of lotuses and this very body is the body of the Buddha."

Can we know this place by trying to make it happen? No, we are all already like this from the origin, as Ninomiya Sontoku wrote:

no sound
no smell
the rain,
the earth,
the heavens,
today once
again born,
without end.

Without using brush or ink, this endless life energy paints history--living and dying, being born over and over again, without stopping, without hesitation.

Dogen Zenji called it the original face.

In the spring, the flowers everywhere,
In the summer, the song of the meadowlark,
In the autumn, the radiant moon,
In the winter, the snow and chill.

In spring, the abundant flowers are me and I am the flowers. In summer, the singing voice of the meadowlark is like a mother who is seeking her lost child and the child who is looking for its mother. It's not just a bird's voice; in it we feel this pain and longing, and this is our world as well. Material things and our mind become one and the same. In that autumn world of the far-away moon, there is something we see. It is not greediness for material things but a desire to see that moon as our own Mind: to know that truth. The snow in winter wraps everything in white, and all of our differences and pain become purified and embraced in that winter scenery. We are liberated from our differences. This is Dogen's teaching.

The heavens and earth are me, and so is everyone in society. If we see it like this, then the moon and I are not separate, and neither are the flowers and I, nor the earth and heavens and I, nor society and I.

I am the flowers, the flowers are me,
I am the moon, the moon is me,
I am the heavens, the heavens are me.

It is all my pain and my experience. But this doesn't happen from hearing the explanation of some philosopher. When we open our mind and receive the heavens and the earth, we will know for ourselves how it is. We can then know the state of mind of the Buddha, and we are in one single layer that serene Mind. We know the root source of all existence, and we are one

Truth with everything, with the entire universe. The universe changes its form always, but we know its essence and know that it is eternal, and so are we. Death and birth cannot exist there. The universe is our life, and there is no death and birth in that. In this very body that decays, we experience this eternal life, and that is religion.



*My boat filled
with moonlight,
I return home*

Manssen no meigetsu
nose ete kaeru

満船明月載得帰

This is the second line of a couplet:

In the still cold waters of the night, no fish were biting
My boat filled with moonlight, I return home

This poem's meaning can also be expressed as "empty handed, I return

home"; this is the expression of a state of mind of complete awakening, when our all-embracing Mind has opened. There is great joy in this state of mind. The bright, full moon shines down from above our heads. The waves are gold and silver, filling us with light until we become that samadhi of Light, with not a single sound anywhere. There is only cool, clear air surrounding and enveloping us. Forgetting the fishing line, forgetting the body, we are absorbed into this light, but this light is not the moon in the sky, it is the moon of each of us.

That wisdom of prajna radiates everywhere, through the three realms vertically and throughout the ten directions horizontally. This is the prajna wisdom that forgets the body and becomes one with each moment, where there is no objective other, where that which is shining and that which perceives the shining are one whole. This is what gives birth to the mountains and to the ocean, to all worlds. This state of mind is not just from our eyes but from our ears and mouth and awareness as well. From all of these the light is shining forth; all of the universe is one bright light. We have to experience this state of mind.

Our state of mind is wide open. There is not one thing we can call our own, so we have no fear of losing anything. We forget our body, and this whole great Space is our home. In our minds there are no thoughts to be caught on, no clouds, no problems. In the entire world there is nothing that we cannot throw away, and when we are caught on nothing, we feel no fear.

While it is human to not want to die, if we resist death we feel even greater fear and terror. Money is convenient and useful, but we can live without it. If we feel we must have lots of money to live, then we become a slave of it; our limited life span becomes something we have to use for making money, and we spend all our time pursuing it. We may also be caught on fame and knowledge and end

up disagreeing and being in conflict with people; then whether asleep or awake we cannot be free from our fear. People feel fear in their hearts, worrying about what might come jumping out at them; they feel terror and don't know what will happen. When they get like this, even the long leaf of a reed touching their skin feels like a ghost attacking. Then, if the moonlight falls on them they see the reed for what it is and know there is nothing to be afraid of. When we feel fear we have all kinds of difficult ideas and extraneous thoughts about things. We see things upside down and imagine things that are not even there; to liberate ourselves from that one speck of fear, we have to know that abundant, huge, wide-open mind. Then we can see the world with clear vision and see clearly how much and how often people misunderstand each other, and with what pain and suffering and difficulties people live. Seeing clearly, we can live in play in the pure land of Nirvana.

Ryokan said,

When sick it is fine to be sick,
When meeting a calamity, it is
fine to be meeting a calamity,
When dying, it is fine to be
dying.

There is just this. Sickness, calamity, and death are things that we actually do encounter, the real things of life. There is nothing else on which we can depend. When we receive it all naturally, that will resolve our fear; then we can feel strong.

My boat filled with moonlight, I
return home

Not one of the fish that were supposed to be caught was caught, but the boat is full of moonlight and we lightly row it home. To know this state of mind is the highest joy. No matter where we are in our life, we are able to bring forth infinite wisdom and give it to

many people with our capabilities, and this is where the truth is manifested. I hope you can all taste the flavor of this state of mind.



*My mind
is like
the autumn moon*

Waga kokoro
shūgetsu ni nitari

吾心似秋月

This line is from the poems of Kanzan,
expressing his state of mind:

My mind is like the autumn
moon
clear and bright in a pool of
jade
nothing can compare

This line is from the poems of Kanzan,
expressing his state of mind:

My mind is like the autumn
moon
clear and bright in a pool of
jade
nothing can compare

what more can I say

Another poet has sung it,

That state of mind where the
moon is me, I am the moon
and the difference cannot even
be known
Quietly, the evening moon of
the autumn

As we look at the bright autumn
moon we become that state of mind
where we cannot tell if the moon is
me or I am the moon. We can't even
tell if that is me there, as the moon,
shining brightly. We know completely
that place where self and other have
no separation, where the world and
the self are born simultaneously and
without division. Our form is shone
through by the illumination of the
moon. The light is our subjective
being and the shining of our true
mind. The moon is the light of our
Mind, and the light of our Mind is the
light of the moon, illuminating the
heavens and the earth.

We could also say, "It enters me; I enter
it." It enters me, and I enter the world:
the moon and I become one, the
heavens and the earth and I become
me shining brightly. To taste the flavor
of this completely serene state of
mind where everything becomes one
continuous being is zazen, and with
this we understand Zen from our own
experience. When we realize this, the
heavens and the earth are, exactly as
they are, our body. "All the things in
the whole universe are my eyes," as
one ancient put it.

In this world, the rivers and mountains
and flowers and birds are all my eyes,
and all sounds are my ears. This world

in all its transparency is my perception.
The entire universe as me is becoming
the moon and shining, becoming the
sun and illuminating everything. The
world that is being illuminated is, in
its entirety, my world. This world is
my awareness and one truth existing
and becoming, not in an idea but
as an actuality. And there all of the
pain of people everywhere is also my
pain. This state of mind is the state
of mind of Zen, the state of mind of
the Buddha. Right where we are is the
land of lotuses, the ongoing eternal
world, the eternity of all time in one
instant. This is what it means to see
God, and here we see our true self
and find eternal liberation. When we
know this directly, forgetting our small
self, going beyond all perception of
time and of space, becoming one with
the whole universe and becoming the
moon, shining brightly, this is Zen.

In this way, while we are a self, we
are also one with the one truth of the
whole universe.

My mind is like the autumn
moon
clear and bright in a pool of
jade
nothing can compare
what more can I say

This mind, the source of the subjective,
the source of all awareness, is what is
creating this world, like a mirror that
reflects exactly what it perceives.

The external world is always in flux,
changing in accordance with the laws
of karmic affiliation, with all things
being born and dying. Our awareness
is like a camera lens, or a mirror, which
receives anything and everything,
as it is, in its entirety. This awareness
without any discrimination whatsoever
is the pure awareness with which we
are born. Here there is no dust on the
mirror; here the lens is not clouded at
all.

From time to time thoughts arise and
the ego comes forth and is born and
dies in one instant, but we needn't be



pushed around by it. It is not that there is no ego; rather, if while perceiving each phenomenon we are not moved around by it, we retain our pure awareness. We are not colored by that scenery because our awareness is zero; in each moment we perceive what is there karmically and we respond, but the source, the base of our awareness, remains zero. WE respond, but in the true base we are not caught at all.

In this way we become like a mirror that will reflect everything that comes before it but will not hold on to anything that is no longer there, or like a lens that sees everything, but does not see what is no longer there.

From one moment to the next the scenery changes and we take it in. We have ego awareness, but we are not influenced by it. It comes forth and we become it, but then it goes and we return to zero. That zero can take in each and every thing infinitely, but that zero is beyond all karmic affiliations. This Mind is infinite and immeasurable, like the boundless universe. It can take in the bright radiance of the sun and the moon without any limitations. In the same way that the universe is so immense it takes in all of the planets, our awareness, no matter what we perceive, does not become small and narrow.

Even though we perceive time, the true base of our awareness is beyond all time. Our memories don't color what we experience. All of the past and future is within our mind, but our mind does not become crowded. Our Mind is not a phenomenal essence that is born in accordance with karmic affiliation. It is that which moves not at all, an absolute master from which we can awaken.

When Rinzai Zenji describes the Dharma as having no form yet extending into the ten directions, he's talking about this infinite deep Silence. This is the source of our Mind. This is what Kanzan is talking about, and



*The geese know
no confusion*

Kari ni meiri no I
nashi

雁無迷離意

This phrase is found in a couplet:

The geese know no confusion
Water does not intend to reflect
shadows

In Japan it is common to see geese flying in the autumn sky at evening, without limit, without hurrying. This

autumn scene is very familiar to the Japanese. To see the geese perfectly harmonized in flight touches us deeply in our hearts and in our awareness.

“When it starts to get dark you come home from playing! The birds all go home in the evening too! That bird at the front is the dad, and the bird at the back is the mom! Aren’t they all well behaved?” As children we were taught by the geese in these ways.

In autumn the geese fly south to avoid the oncoming cold, and then with the warmth of spring they return. This migration is a natural way of protecting their lives. They do not go against the natural way of existence and engage in blind, unnecessary movement.

Without thinking about shining it shines, the moon without thinking about reflecting, it reflects the Sarasawa pond.

When water is calm and clear, without fail the moon in the sky will be reflected there. Whether the water is that of a pond, a lake, an ocean, or a muddy puddle, if it is still, then without fail the moon is reflected. Yet the water has no intention of reflecting something; it is not trying to produce a reflection.

As it says in the Zen phrases, a mirror reflects just what comes to it. If a Westerner stands in front of it, it becomes and reflects a westerner; if a Chinese person comes before it, the mirror manifests the form of a Chinese person. There is no intention there. Each thing is manifested just as it is, and then when it departs, there is nothing remaining. This is not only about water but about the mind that each and every one of us has since birth.

Even though scientists have proved that while in the womb we already are in some ways influenced by our brain capacities and our heredity, when we are born our essence remains pure.

Yet immediately after birth we are touched by so many external stimuli, coming in through all of our senses, influencing all of our brain cells and being absorbed and stored.

From sixteen months of age, we are able to perceive “one.” This is prior to an understanding of good and bad; one could say that this is the mind of God. God gives the rain to both the good and the bad. The compassion of the Buddha is the same. The vow of Amida is to liberate all beings, regardless of age or wealth; every single one who seeks liberation will be liberated regardless of their status. This is the true vow.

At twenty-three months this mind understands “two,” and when “two” is understood ego perception comes into being. When awareness of self comes into play, awareness of good and bad arises as well. We want to be thought well of, and we don’t want to lose. We can calculate what is better for us. A human being as an individual is born from here, and from here also come science and religion and social manners and common dualistic ideas about how things are. It is frequently said that our mind as it is cultivated in our first three years is the mind with which we live for one hundred years. At three we have already created the base from which we will live for our entire life. How we will live in society comes from this base. Our challenge and struggle in being human also begin from here. From here begins our deep struggle in wanting to improve and not give up and to seek without ceasing and at the same time from here arise those possessive emotions that want to protect our own ego and world. With these emotions we want to push away and be above others as well. We want to improve ourselves, and we hurt others to make ourselves central in everything, intensely seeking and pushing others down simultaneously. Living with this two-edged sword, both sides of which cut simultaneously, is a challenge of being human, and for liberating people from

this dilemma we have religion.

We cannot throw our ego away completely, but decline ownership of it and return to our origin prior to our ego. To awaken to that is the subtle flavor of zazen. When we forget our physical body and loosen our egoistic and extraneous thinking, as our body and mind become quiet, for the first time we can receive this world as it actually is. No matter how evil or stupid someone is, if they do zazen and realize that world of one, they can see things exactly as they really are, as one living whole truth. If we can receive this and accept it, then even while living in a world of discrimination we can support all people and forgive everything that happens.

The geese know no confusion
Water does not intend to reflect
shadows

To not be separated from the true way of things is the true nature of our mind. While being in the world to forget ourselves completely and become one being with the other person: this is our true original quality.



落霞與孤鶩齊飛

*In the sunset haze,
a lone goose
on the wing*

Rakka, koboku to
hitoshiku tobu

落霞與孤鶩齊飛

These phrases are a couplet. The clouds are tatters in the deep, clear, expansive blue of the autumn sky. In that same oneness there is also a deep, blue, full body of water, the water of autumn. This magnanimous huge scenery is what is being sung of here. Hakuin Zenji gave these phrases to express the emptiness written of in the *Heart Sutra*. Through the wide-open, all-embracing, boundless blue sky, the autumn breeze blows briskly, filling everything abundantly. This is the state of mind of prajna wisdom. Anyone can awaken to this.

*The
clear autumn water
is the same color
as the great sky*

Shūsui, chōten tomo
ni isshiki

落霞與孤鶩齊飛

If we become the state of mind of the wide-open autumn sky, this does not mean that there is nothing there. To have is not to have, and to not have is to have. Form as it is emptiness; emptiness, as it is, is form. To hold on to nothing at all means that we can receive everything. No matter what comes along, no matter what happens, we are not obstructed. As Rinzai says, "There is nothing that comes to me that is liked nor disliked."

This is the world of "Autumn waters one color with the endless sky."

秋
水
共
天
一
色

A lone goose is joyfully flying through the lines of mist at sunset. This is "gyate gyate paragyate parasam gyate bodhi svaha."

In the 270 words of the *Heart Sutra*, this phrase at the end is the central message. It is chanted in its original language rather than in Chinese or Japanese or English. These words are called "soji." We chant them wholeheartedly as they are and go beyond delusion, not thinking of a meaning but in order to separate from any negative states of mind. We do this to know a positive, high-quality state of mind and to bring forth the merit that is in these words. If we should make an attempt at a translation of them it would be, "Arrived, arrived! Arrived on the other shore!" We have realized enlightenment. "Realized! Realized! Completely realized!" Just as we are, that is fine!

If we chant these last words with our whole being, sweating with our whole body and becoming the words completely, we forget our body; in chanting them tens of times, hundreds of times, we forget time, and then we feel deep wonder and amazement. Our tears fall and we can teach the Dharma. People of old taught this, and it is true. We chant with our whole body until we lose track of our whole body, and the sutra soaks into our whole body and being. Then for the first time we can become this state of mind like the huge, wide-open autumn sky. We know that state of mind when we forget our whole body and all of our thoughts, when we forget ourselves completely. When we are concerned about nothing to do with ourselves, for the first time we can work for others.

When we can forget ourselves completely and become the state of mind of others, that is our greatest good fortune in the world. These phrases are telling of the experience of this state of mind

歳雪連天白

*The year-end snow
reaches white
to the sky*

Rōsetsu, ten ni
tsuranatte shiroshi

歳雪連天白

These phrases from the Kaian Kokugo of Hakuin describe the scenery of the new year. The snow from last year lingers, and as far as can be seen the world is white. A cold wind penetrates all, so severe it is as if your body is freezing to the very marrow. This is

the state of mind Hakuin is describing, even though there is no way to capture this feeling with words.

From within that chill, we melt away and become one with the white silver that fills the universe; we become that chill completely. When he was twenty-nine, Hakuin was at the Inroyuji Temple of Kashaku. Doing yaza, he listened to the snow's sound and became absorbed into its serenity to such a depth that all he could perceive was one white world everywhere. Wherever he looked, it was white in every direction, without a single detail. In this state of mind, all extraneous thoughts are gone, and there is no one to hear the sound of the snow. As the snow piles up higher and higher, we are one and the same with the white scenery; our eyes and ears are completely purified, with nothing intruding, completely without object. The swoosh swoosh of the falling snow has become a sound without sound. We have to taste this flavor at least once, or we cannot speak about Zen.

We must come to know this place where everything is extinguished completely, where even the idea of the possibility of a world is gone, where there is only white snow piling up higher and higher. But if we remain in that world, without any thoughts, we will surely be stuck there our whole life.

The early spring wind blows
cold on the door

The snow that is left from last year, making everything we see and hear pure white, is joined by the new year's snow. The world is bright white, austere in every direction, brilliantly sparkling.

Coming out from the behind
the cloud,
I am this winter moon.
The wind stings my body;
the snow is freezing cold.

These are the words of Myoe Shonin of Togano, describing the countryside near Kyoto. As he walks carefully back from the zendo on a snowy evening, the moon comes out from behind the clouds, and he is unable to know if it is the moon that is protecting him on the snowy evening or the moon who is walking down the path. A wolf cries, and it is okay, the moon is there too; its light is everywhere, the moon and his mind complete in oneness.

Where the world of nature and I are one mind, where the world and this warm love are melted into one, this is Zen.

銀碗裏盛雪

*Piling
snow
into a
silver bowl*

Gin wan ri ni yuki wo
moru

銀碗裏盛雪

In Case 13 of the Blue Cliff Records a monk asks Master Haryo, "What is the Daiba school?"

Haryo answers, "Piling snow into a silver bowl."

Haryo Zenji, also known as Kokan, was

the abbot of Shinkain and was one who kept alive the wind of Unmon's line. The area of Gakucho in which Haryo lived was known for its beautiful scenery, and Haryo was famous because every word out of his mouth reflected a profound state of mind. His teacher, Unmon, was also famous for the subtle flavor of his words, and this quality was very important in this line.

Unmon had even said that he did not need a sutra chanted when he died, that only to read the pivotal words of Haryo was sufficient.

A monk asked, "What is the path?"

Haryo answered, "A bright-eyed man falls in the well."

A second monk asked, "What is the Blown Hair Sword?"

Haryo answered, "The tip of each branch of coral supports the moon."

A third monk asked, "What is the Daiba school?"

Haryo answered, "Piling snow into a silver bowl."

Before becoming the Fifteenth Patriarch, Daiba was a master of what were called the heretical paths. Ryuju Sonja, the Fourteenth Patriarch (also known as Nagarjuna), was considered to be the one who brought the philosophy of the Dharma to completion. He was famous for having kept the teaching pure and its essence clear. It was from Ryuju Sonja that Daiba received transmission as the Fifteenth Patriarch. Ryuju Sonja was a great scholar, and he left three works that remain well known today. He was abundant in his expression yet had great subtlety in its manifestation. He taught from what he had learned and experienced and also spread Buddhism. The Daiba sect became the Buddha's Dharma, and the Buddha's Dharma became Daiba sect.

Baso Doitsu said, "Wherever there are words and phrases, that is the Daiba sect; just this can be considered principal." The Daiba sect is, as it

is, the words of the subtle ultimate; this is where the Daiba sect is found. Most attempts at putting the ultimate into words result only in lifeless explanation, but because of the Daiba sect the essence remains alive, avoiding verbal pitfalls. In addition to using words, the Daiba sect used the ninety-six external paths, but the most important point was awakening to THIS. That Baso Doitsu taught this was his great kindness. He told us not to be jostled around by words.

Originally Zen was not called a sect. From the Buddha the Dharma was transmitted to Makakasho, and from Makakasho it was passed to Ananda and on to all the Patriarchs. This is Zen. It was received in each person's deep character, and the wind of the teaching was manifested from there. The true foundation was to awaken to THAT. The seat of both the Dharma and the Buddha was here, and to be freed from all attachments was essential. If we are only playing around with expressing this by words, then Baso Doitsu Zenji would say, "Among all of the ninety-six external paths, you are far below the worst!"

"What is the Daiba sect?"

"What is Daruma's Zen?"

"What is the most ultimate point of Buddhism?"

"What is the most profound point of Unmon's Zen?"

Haryo answered, "Piling snow into a silver bowl"

Into a newly made, shining silver bowl, freshly fallen pure-white snow is piled high. This freshness is the Daiba sect, zazen, and Haryo's state of mind. Both the Patriarchs' state of mind and the Buddha's teachings have been pierced through. Subject and object, the world that is seen and the one who is seeing it, have become one. When Haryo said, "Piling snow in a silver bowl," is that what he meant?

No.

The Daiba sect is not something that can be reached with mental understanding and imagination in that way. It is the mind where not even that remains. The place where there is no Patriarchs' state of mind or truth of the Buddha's teaching, no subject or object, not even the slightest bit of anything remaining, that is the truth of the Daiba sect.

As people are, so are their words. In that there is no need for explanation. There is no need to play with words; people's words are an expression of their deep character. The Daiba sect is the advanced state of mind with no separation between words and character, no explanation, no mental understanding to be inserted.

When we go into the world with that state of mind, then for the first time we can truly function. For caregivers especially, if there is the slightest idea of "what can I do for you?" or "what efforts can I make for you?"--if there is any stench of that kind of dualism--then one's help is being forced on the other person. The patient will then feel pressured, as if being pushed down by a great burden. The true liberation of all beings can happen only when we are without any idea of helping at all; then the patients' joy can come forth.

Piling snow in a silver bowl

This is Zen's highest state of mind and the most necessary thing in society today. When we can function without force or attachment in our relations, then we have the power to bring forth each other's deepest state of mind.



*Look, look the year
draws to an end*

Miyo, miyo, rōgetsu
tsuku

看看臘月盡

This line is also from the records of Master Kido.

An ancient sang it like this: "Here comes the new year, will we be able to put the world in order?" It has never been possible to know what might come tomorrow; we can't see even an inch around the next corner. Living with the insecurity of not knowing what might happen next, we do know one thing without fail, that December 31 will be the last day of the year.

Where there is life, there is death. This is why Ikkyu Zenji put a skeleton on top of his head and walked around saying, "Watch out! Be careful!"

Another Zen phrase says:

Every year the flowers bloom the same.
Every year humans are not the same.

When speaking about things we don't refer to them as coming and going. We talk about last year and this year, creating something where nothing actually exists. We ourselves then invent the idea of getting older by a year. This is because we see ourselves and things as separate; we force what is originally unified into two separate categories and make ourselves miserable. We do not have to get stuck on some idea of an old and a new. There is nothing younger than I am. In the sutras it even says, "A twenty-five-year-old father gives birth to a one-hundred-year-old child."

Shinran Shonin also said, "I have never said a single sutra for my mother or father. And why not? Because all people everywhere, in rebirth after rebirth, at some time have been my mother and father."

I have never chanted the Buddha's name for my parents. At some time in the long cycle of rebirths, everyone in the world has been my father or my mother. To liberate all of the people in the world is my work. There is no need to divide people into categories like mother and father.

There is the saying that without our even noticing it, lint is piling up in our pockets. At the end of the year we do a huge cleaning in which we even sweep behind the dressers and shelves and move our bookcases, so that all of the dust that has collected there over the year can be cleared out. Even though the individual motes of dust are unnoticeable, as they accumulate their quantity increases beyond what

we could imagine. That makes us think.

Even when we aren't looking for anything in them, after one year we have collected a huge quantity of magazines, newspapers, and books. We think we will want to take a good look at them sometime, but before we know it the year has passed and, having had no free time, we didn't get to look at them at all, and we have no place to put them either.

We think we are going to need all of this accumulation at some point, so we put it away, until finally we have so much we can't keep everything in good order. We have lots of poems and writings that we have only just begun, and we want to complete them all while we are still alive so that those who come after us won't have to figure out what to do with them. Sometimes we just want to make everything clean and orderly so that we won't leave such a big mess behind when we die.

In the world of things that can be seen with the eyes, we know it is this way, but in the world where things cannot be seen, in the world of our Mind, isn't it even more like that? In Buddhism we call this world of our mind the storehouse of consciousness. Just as the peaks of the Himalayas cannot be seen because they are covered with snow throughout the year, in our mind there is a place that is unknown to us. All of our various past experiences, all of them, are stored up in this mind.

I am not good at remembering things, but if I try a little while I can find what I am looking for tucked away in there someplace. This storehouse contains not just our experiences and knowledge since birth, but also, from before we were born, the experiences of our parents and our ancestors as well. It is all stored as subconscious material, stored away somewhere, even if we don't know where it is. It is a little bit strange to not know what is lurking there, deep in our subconscious.

When we look up at the expansive blue sky, it is so empty and clear, until a speck of something gets in our eye. The same is true with our deep awareness. In our mind we have infinite experience and knowledge and memory, but as we turn the next corner we may run into darkness.

This is the mumyo, or original darkness, and from here our mozo and desires are exuded like gas. From here we perceive as if there is a small self and we live from that perspective. We are, as an ego, actually nothing more than a conglomeration of past memories and a lump of this dark ignorance. In human society there is always conflict because people act according to their own opinions and demand that things be done the way they want. This is because people are always holding on to their individual memories and experiences and turning to them for refuge. Because they do not know any deeper refuge, they cannot trust and believe completely.

As Shotoku Daishi said, "What that person thinks is no, I think is yes; what I think is no, he thinks is yes. I am sure I am right, and he thinks he is right--this is the way of the ignorant person." When we are all caught on good and bad, who can settle what is right and wrong? From the differences of opinion between parents and children to those between different nations, the argument is not between human and human but one of memory versus memory, experience versus experience, history versus history.

Yet our experiences of things are in fact incomplete and transient. We say, "That person is terrible" or "That person is awful," but it is not that the other person is bad. It is the memory of what they said that is bad, like something pasted in an album. People's minds are always changing and evolving; this is the truth of how we are. Yet our memories of the past influence our actuality, and this is, for our awareness, a source of great confusion.

Finally, it is the end of the year. Let's clean not just our rooms but our minds as well, straightening up our thinking and ideas, sweeping everything out and welcoming the new year with a mind that is fresh and clear.



*Cold clouds embrace
the wondrous rock*

Kanun, yūseki o idaku

寒雲抱幽石

These lines are from the sixth section of the Kaian Kokugo. In the severe chill of winter, the cold clouds embrace the exposed rocky tops of the mountains. The scenery appears so cold, it seems everything will freeze. Into the frozen garden pond, the moon sets. That cold moon makes the whole world transparent with its light. The chill's severity is felt there too.

Nansen Fugan Zenji (748-834) did sanzen with Hyakujo Ekai Zenji, his older Dharma brother under Baso.

Hyakujo asked, "Was there something that the Buddha and all of the



*The frosty moon
shines
on the clear pond*

Sōgetsu seichi o
terasu

霜月照清池

Patriarchs could not express?"

This is a terrifying question. It is asking about that truth which cannot be expressed, which can only be realized through experience. Yet as soon as the experience is spoken of, it is no longer the pure experience. In this unanswerable question Hyakujo was asking about the very experience of the Buddha.

Nansen answered, "There is."

Nansen recognized that essence and taught it. When the Buddha was dying, he said that even though he had taught for forty-nine years, he had never taught a single word. Even though the Buddha taught always, and his words became the 5,049 sutras, the enormous quantity of words in those 5,049 sutras can't express it. So what is it?

Nansen answered with this essence itself.

Hyakujo was also direct and tenacious. He asked further, "Then what is that which cannot be spoken?"

That which cannot be taught in the sutras, how have you understood it? He was gouging out that mind of deep awakening.

Nansen then answered, "It is not mind, it is not Buddha, it is not a thing." It is just this as it is.

Here is the experience expressed exactly as it is. Vertically it extends through the three realms of time; horizontally it extends into the ten directions. That which surges and fills the great heavens and the great earth is not mind, not a physical body, and not a mental understanding, only the thing exactly as it is.

Later it was said, "No body, no words." In the experience exactly as it is, even while the words are being spoken, there is no one saying them. Do we receive this as words or as experience? If we have not realized this experience, there is nothing that can be done or said about it!

Hyakujo said, "There! It is said!"

Of course Hyakujo understood, and while understanding he heard those words clearly.

Nansen said, "Whether it was said or not, I don't know. Only "this!" In this way he answered. That unmoved essence, the experience exactly as is, is what must be seen here.

Then Nansen asked, "How about you?"

Hyakujo answered, "I have no such great wisdom as those historical Patriarchs, to say it or not say it. I don't know about anything as difficult as that." Although Hyakujo was using words, the experience that is absorbed into those words, manifested exactly as is, is what has to be read here. We have to look closely at the essence of Master Hyakujo Ekai. It may look as if he is running away, but he's not. He is expressing what is beyond words, saying what cannot be put into words.

Nansen digs in further and says, "What do you mean? I don't get it."

He is saying that not about the words of Hyakujo but about his own experience and state of mind. He is not saying that without knowing the essence itself; rather he is experiencing this essence that cannot be expressed and responding to the words of Hyakujo. Nansen said, "I don't get it at all," but it is not that he doesn't understand. Both Hyakujo and Nansen are expressing the same experience. They have died and know completely, yet they say they don't know at all. The Dharma that can't be spoken is thus expressed thoroughly and completely. This essence has to be seen.

Finally Hyakujo responds, "It seems like I have talked too much." This is the truth that cannot be spoken, that which is taught without being taught. While one who knows this experience can't describe it, the experience is manifested in the words that are spoken. Can the truth of deep mind be spoken or not? It was the Buddha who taught what cannot be spoken of. Those who have experienced it can perceive it surging through his words, while those who do not know the experience cannot perceive it there. There is nothing that can be done about this. For people who do not know the experience, it has not been taught.

In this same way, for one who has realized the marrow of Zen, in each footfall and in each hand movement

the mind of enlightenment is fully realized. In everything, we know a deepening of the ultimate realization of the truth, while at the same time we do everything possible to liberate all people. This honest state of mind is our home.

We cut the roots of mozo and also of all life energy and at the same time enlighten others, bringing them back to life. To do that and only that, in one straight line, wholeheartedly, with our whole being, is the true center of Zen.

“Cold clouds embrace the wondrous rock” is this state of mind. “The frosty moon shines on the clear pond” is the state of mind of Hyakujo Ekai. To know the profound truth of Nansen and Hyakujo we have to become those cold clouds ourselves. WE have to become that wondrous rock. WE have to become that frosty moon, reflected in that pure clear water without the slightest speck of anything else there. If you try to understand it with words and judge it with your head, the experience is impossible to realize.

When Hakuin Zenji was in his forty-second year, he picked up the Lotus Sutra. Because he had never been very fond of this sutra, he hadn’t looked at it for years and didn’t know it well. As he started to read, from under the porch the very faint, fragile cry of a cricket could be heard. Hakuin was suddenly awakened to the deepest teaching of the Lotus Sutra. In his diary he wrote that with this experience at the age of forty-two, for the first time he understood the free, everyday state of mind of his teacher Shojū Rojin, and understood directly that the Buddha had not deceived anyone.

Although Shojū Rojin lived in silence in the mountains, in his solitude he was not just doing zazen in samadhi. While living in the mountains he was every single day liberating all people all over the globe. That this actuality was being manifested was what Hakuin was finally able to realize.

The Buddha did not deceive people with words and phrases but lived with firm determination to liberate all beings no matter what. This deep determination gave birth to the words of the sutra, which Hakuin finally saw clearly.

The sutras tell about various kinds of karmic affiliation with the Dharma. Some encounter it by hearing about it, and others by meeting someone of practice. There are many such divisions in the sutras, and in Buddhism there are divisions into groups such as the Theravada and the Mahayana, but above that, beyond any word or half a word, was the Buddha’s actual liberation of all people, his immovable determination to not quit until all people are liberated, no matter what. Hakuin was now able to see clearly that there is nothing of greater importance than this passion, this deep mind, this awakening, and that the essence of the Mahayana is in just that. Hakuin said that for the first time his eyes of the Dharma were opened.

“Right now I have realized that all of the people in these three realms are all my children and everywhere in these three realms is my home.” From these words we see clearly the Buddha’s great compassion and understand how all beings are from the origin Buddhas. We know that the Buddha came into this world in order to realize and teach this true-seeing eye of wisdom to all people.

This great compassion has been compared to a mother chewing the food for her children to eat. All people must be liberated, no matter what has to be done. Hakuin realized this and wrote, “This endlessly chirping cricket under the porch, the tears that it has brought forth, these are the burning compassion of the Buddha’s vow of liberation of all beings.” This is what he realized at that time.



*With yin
fully exhausted,
yang begins to appear*

Gun in hakujin shite,
ichi yō shōzu

群陰剥塵一陽生

With yin fully exhausted, yang begins to appear

The grasses and trees in the grove all send forth new leaves

These lines, from volume 17 of the Katai Futoroku, perfectly express the winter solstice.

In the northern countries the sun can be seen in the winter sky for only about fifteen minutes a day. There are many days with no sight of the sun whatsoever. The people in these countries wait for the completion of

the yin, the darkest part of the year, and for the return of the yang, the lengthening rays of the day's light. In the olden days when there was no electricity, this was their greatest joy and they would celebrate it with a big festival. Probably the celebration of Christmas on December 25th was also related to this natural phenomenon.

In Buddhism, when desires are extinguished, it is also this time of "with yin fully exhausted, yang begins to appear." Humans are a lump of desires. We act based on our egos, and our desires spread infinitely in every direction. We get angry at one thing after another; in our hearts we are greedy and grumbling, ignorant and blind; in our minds we are always thinking various thoughts and because of them live days full of misery. When those desires and attachments are over and done with, how refreshing and clear it is! When those desires and attachments are always pushing us around we are miserable, so of course we pray for an end to them.

On the eighth of December the Buddha saw the morning star, and the very first thing he said was, "How wondrous! How wondrous! All beings are endowed from the origin with this same bright clear mind to which I have just awakened. Only because they are caught on their attachments and desires they cannot realize this!"

The Buddha was a brilliant man who was probably rarely so astounded. Yet he expressed these amazed words of wonder, from the bottom of his heart.

"How wondrous! How wondrous! How mysterious!" We ignorant people are all Buddha! If we live from our egos, full of anger, jealousy, and desire, then we are only an infinite whirlpool of misery, and in our minds that darkness is deep. In fact, those things to which we are attached have no fixed existence but are like passing clouds. They are like mist or dew and are only coincidentally there; with time they will always fade and be

gone. The true form of our mind is the Buddha Nature without birth or death. The source point of the liberation of all people is that we are all born already endowed with this eternal life of no birth and no death; knowing this, we awaken to our infinite compassion and wisdom. All sentient beings are essentially Buddhas, as the Buddha taught.

Born into this world as the prince of a small country, and being socially, domestically, psychologically, and materially blessed, not lacking anything, the Buddha had nothing to be dissatisfied with. So why did he throw away all of that knowledge, that home life full of good fortune, that country, all of those blessings and possessions and go into the mountains? He was facing head-on the greatest question, the question of death. The meaning and value of life had been lost to him. The largest fortune, the most superior craftsmanship, and the profoundest philosophy, when they come into direct contact with the face of death, are completely powerless. Even with a royal title, this great barrier cannot be avoided or run away from. Isn't there something that is eternal? Isn't there something that does not die? What is the truth?

Young Siddhartha Gautama was intently seeking the eternal truth. He threw away all of his good fortune and went into the mountains. There, the final people to whom he went for teaching were two hermits, Arada Kalama and Udraka Ramaputra, who taught him about the philosophy of not thinking anything at all, not even thinking of how one is not thinking anything at all. Our mistake is having thoughts about birth and death, pain and pleasure, good and bad. To not think anything at all, and to even forget that we are not thinking about them, is satori. That is what takes us beyond birth and death. They said that this is where the eternal truth is found.

But Siddhartha, who had studied philosophy deeply himself, could not be satisfied with such a superficial theory. He asked them, "In that belief of not thinking anything at all, and not even thinking of how you are thinking anything at all, is there an 'I' there or is there no 'I' there?"

If there is an "I" still present there, then even if you don't think, that is a temporary soothing, an intoxication, and without fail there will come a time when one is again thinking. Again the delusions will come. If there is no "I," then no matter what I think, there will be no pain or confusion. If there is an "I," then to say not to think is only a transient, superficial solution. If there is no "I," then what is it that has hope in life? For what are we alive? What is it that lives?

The two hermits couldn't answer, and Siddhartha realized that because no one could tell him what he had to know, he would have to find it out for himself. He knew that if he did not do that, then the world would be eternally unliberated. For himself and for all humankind he sought the eternal truth. Once again he set out for the mountains. Each day he allowed himself only one grain of rice. He ate millet and somehow stayed alive. It says in the ancient records that he ate nuts from the trees and gathered grasses. He did not negate this theory that satori is to not think anything and to not even think you are not thinking anything. This was probably the most profound human philosophy of that time. But is there an "I" there, or is there no "I" there? This was the question.

He did meditation for six years and became deeper and deeper and purer and purer, cutting away all of his desires and all of the shadows of his extraneous thoughts as well. Physically and spiritually he was determined to become completely empty, to become a dead person who was just breathing. Finally, he entered the state of mind where the ego is negated completely.

The western philosopher says, "I think therefore I am." This was the beginning of modern philosophy, but if that which thinks is deep in our brain cells only, then all we have discovered is the source of our delusion. If we say that there is no such thing as an ego, then what is it that is breathing here? Does a human have a true center, or is there no true center? Yes or no? There was a huge and serious problem to be resolved here.

Siddhartha entered the place of absolute mu, but he knew that was not yet true satori. A slight insecurity remained, and he also knew that the serenity of that place was accompanied by a feeling of hurry, a thought. If that hadn't been the case, he would have been able to sit down and stay there. And if he had done that, then his great capability and potential would not have been given birth to. In this way, he realized that while the true nature of our mind is to be thinking nothing, nor to be thinking that we are thinking nothing, yet if we stay like that it's not the living truth; we have to be in the world and be in wonder and functioning.

On the eighth of December when he saw the morning star, suddenly and abruptly Siddhartha realized the absolute mu, and the small self that had been completely negated exploded. A huge life energy was expressed there. To his great amazement he realized that self is not something held in a small physical body, moved around in accordance with our self-conscious awareness. We are not a self caught and attached to being a self but can know that this whole universe is who we actually are. We can know that the whole universe is our body and know the wonder and amazement of this huge, all-embracing self.

The Buddha's direct perception at the very moment when he saw the morning star--that absolute mu of the completely negated small self--became that huge life energy, that entire universe. In that instant he

knew, "That is me there shining!"

This is how he perceived it. With everything compressed into that one point of mu, his mind was as big as the entire universe and exploded in that way.

The mountains, rivers, trees, flowers, and birds, everything existing in the whole universe, were all his life, and they were all enlightened as he was. There were no more divisions between what was seen and what was doing the seeing. They were one and the same. This physical body with its consciousness and the world that consciousness was reflecting became one whole, matched perfectly. The world is me and I am the world. This is not a deluded egoistic "I" stuck in a physical body. This is that which has the whole universe as its body, that all-embracing, huge self. What I see, I am. This was his direct observation.

Having eyes we see, having ears we hear, having a nose we smell, and having a mouth we speak. With our hands we grasp things, and with our feet we carry our body. In this way Rinzai Zenji expresses this experience that you can only know directly. To realize the me that sees and hears and perceives, that which is not separate from any of the sentient beings, is to open up the true wisdom eye. We were born into this world to realize this truly seeing eye of wisdom.

Just as all plants sprout and bring forth their flowers, we are born not to learn a lot of information and explanations, but to realize directly that which unites all beings. This is our main responsibility as humans. And this is the eye of wisdom.

In the first week of December we do Rohatsu sesshin, training in accordance to the deep awakening of the Buddha on December 8, the same day on which the sesshin culminates. For those of us who have put our lives on the line for doing this training, it is our base and is for opening our eye of Buddha wisdom even one day sooner.

Nothing is more important than doing this.

This true experience is what the Patriarchs struggled for and gave everything to keep alive down through today. For this true Dharma to be kept alive so many people of training go beyond the hardships and struggles of this sesshin and, when it is finished, arrive finally at toji toya, the celebration of the winter solstice. Then we are able to offer gratitude for all that we receive so abundantly from Great Nature. The winter solstice is the ultimate pole of the yin, where all of the extraneous thoughts and attachments have been gone beyond.

From the day after the solstice the sun's rays shine a little longer, stretching to one more tatami line each day. It is from this time that spring begins. Our mind's spring also must come, or we will not fulfill our value as humans.



*The sun rises,
and the universe
shines*

Hi idete,
kenkon kagayaku

日出乾坤輝

The sun rises, and the universe
shines
The clouds disperse, and the
mountains are blue

These lines, which were spoken by

Daito Kokushi, are from the first section of the *Kaian Kokugo*.

In the sutras the following story is used to tell about the Buddha's existence in the world. At one time, it was so dark that people couldn't see anything. They had to feel their way around, always insecure and nervous, and always afraid of what might be lurking. If they heard a scream they froze in fear of what it might be. People moved blindly, sighing and moaning, and if one person shouted, then everyone who could hear it got excited. People couldn't tell what their fingers were touching, and everything was a source of worry. When no one knows what is going on around them, everything is a cause of suspicion, and people's minds are always in delusion and confusion.

Then the sun rose in the eastern sky and everything became light. That which had been hidden was revealed. When voices were raised, everyone could see clearly who was speaking and why. Everyone could see what the people around them looked like and knew there was nothing to be afraid of. It became clear that everyone had the same form, with eyes and ears and a nose and a mouth and hands and feet. When all was dark, no one could tell the difference between a high place and a low place or what anything looked like. With the light it became clear that right where they were was a wonderful place. There were mountains soaring high into the sky. There was a great river flowing in front of them and a huge green forest in full foliage, and those sounds no one had been able to identify were all of the animals' voices and the birds' songs. Flowers were blooming, and people were in paradise. With the light, they realized it for the first time.

The Buddha was the first human to be fulfilled in this way. He was the first to realize the eternal. This was the source of human liberation, the sun rising after the long night's darkness. When the sun shines, the whole world

is bright and clear: the mountains and the rivers, the flowers and the birds, the houses and the people all shine with freshness. When the clouds depart, the mountains' form can be seen clearly and sharply. In accordance with the great light of the wisdom of the Buddha we are able to know that all beings are essentially Buddhas. The belief that all people are equal is born, and when those clouds of ego are swept away we know that from the origin we are all endowed with this pure Buddha Nature.

When the Buddha was born he raised his right hand to the sky and lowered his left hand to the earth and said, "In all the heavens and all the earth, there is only One." This is not a description of something miraculous but an indication of how a baby's voice cries out, expressing itself in this way. The right hand reaching toward the sky is to point out, "There is no absolute being up in the sky!" The left hand pointing to the ground is then saying, "There is nothing that can mislead and weaken a human being, no such devil exists! We all have bright, dignified wisdom within." The Buddha was saying that we do not need to rely on anything, only to live fully and freely ourselves. This is the basis of our clarified state of mind. In saying, "In all the heavens and all the earth, there is only One," the Buddha, as the representative of all people, was confirming that all people are endowed equally with a splendid mind from birth, that all people are essentially Buddhas.

"In all the heavens and all the earth, there is only One" is the basic state of Mind of all beings. When he was enlightened under the bodhi tree the Buddha said, "How wondrous! How wondrous! All beings are endowed from the origin with this same bright clear mind to which I have just awakened!" After sitting for six years in meditation, he had realized that all people are endowed with this bright, clear mind from birth. We all already have it!



All living things are endowed with Buddha Nature. If we open the eyes that can truly see this, this dark world instantly becomes a world of light. The mountains, the rivers, the woods, the flowers, the birds, the animals, the insects are all wrapped in the Buddha's great light.

From that time on, for forty-nine years, the Buddha taught this great discovery widely and manifested it, giving it life. And then he held out the golden flower, and Makakasho without any thinking smiled. The true awakening was transmitted in this. The Buddha's deep realization and the deep realization of Makakasho were not in the slightest bit different. Finally when he was eighty years old, on the fifteenth of February, in the shade of a sala tree, the Buddha said that he had taught everyone he had encountered and left a karmic affiliation to the teaching for all others. With this he ended a life of great, bright, shining light. We must all prostrate to this great awakening of the Buddha. At the lap of the Buddha we must express our gratitude, as we bow to the sun rising in the sky. That awakening of eternal wisdom is what guides our path and that of all humankind. We express our thanks to our great guide, the Buddha.



*The person of value
is the one who has
nothing to do*

Buji kore kinin

無事是貴人

These are the words of Master Rinzai from the *Records of Rinzai*: "The Master instructed the group, saying, `Followers of the Way, what is important is to approach things with a true and proper understanding. Walk wherever you please in the world,

but don't let yourself be muddled or misled by that band of goblin spirits. The person of value is the one who has nothing to do. Don't try to do something special, just act ordinary. You look outside yourselves, going off on side roads hunting for something. That's a mistake."

Rinzai Zenji tells us that we must have the correct way of seeing the world, of seeing religion and seeing life! If we are always insecure and can't see things clearly, they will move us around, like someone cringing and terrified by thunder and lightning. We must not live in such a pathetic way. When we do, everyone around us becomes upset too, pulled around by circumstances.

And what is the most appropriate way of looking at things? To think nothing at all. But what does that mean? It means to not seek anything different from what is, to naturally let things be exactly as they are. To throw away all of our own ideas about things, and not think about anything, is to be right smack in the middle of the heavens' great way.

In this way Rinzai Zenji is teaching us clearly. You could say that people cannot live without thinking, that it would not be possible to live in this complex world without thinking, but that is a trivial, small-minded way of looking at things from your own personal position. That is being stuck on this physical body that lasts from a birth to a death and the awareness within that, taking a narrow stance that remains caught on your own thinking. With this kind of insecurity, you will not be able to entrust completely.

When we can throw away our small-minded ways of looking at things and let go of thinking, then everything will come to us from the Buddha, naturally. When we are caught on our own thoughts and ideas, it's difficult to do this. This is where our trust needs to be born. When we can entrust completely, then everything

moves to us, all functions come to us from the Buddha, and our daily life is wide open, completely safe. We have to throw away all of our dualistic thinking. Without hanging on to any personal agenda, we can allow and simply entrust to that greater energy of the heavens and the earth, to the great universe. Here we can discover the Buddha and discover God. This is the way of living in the truth, and there is nothing greater than living like this.

To be a person of value with nothing to do does not mean to protect your ego and then do nothing. Only someone who has thrown away the ego completely can truly do nothing. It is not that each individual is magnificent. If you throw yourself away, if you separate from your small self, then the Buddha will, as it is, become your life. This is what is meant by "The person of value is the one who has nothing to do." This is why standing and sitting and walking are not my work, but I sit and stand and walk as the Buddha at work. All day long, what is necessary appears to me from there.

Hakuin Zenji says of this: "Realizing the form of no-form as form, whether coming or returning we cannot be any place else. Realizing the thought of no-thought as thought, whether singing or dancing we are the voice of the Dharma." This is this essence he is expressing. We don't come and go at our own discretion. "Whether singing or dancing we are the voice of the Dharma." We don't talk and sing and dance to express our small selves. We become one with others and transform and move and flow--this is the work of the Buddha. We are not separate--we move and act as the Buddha's life. The Buddha and us in unison are mysteriously manifested. As we ask, "How are you today"--in fact with anything we say during every day--our words come forth from this place. Becoming one with the Buddha completely, we know the joy of the Dharma.

Our working and sweating and suffering is all the life of the Buddha, and there is a great joy in living that. We are one with society, and we are this place where there is no separation between inside and outside, not just in words but in actuality. If even one person can be brought joy, then that is our joy as well. Another's joy is our joy, another's misery is our misery, another's suffering is our suffering. In this way we live our daily life, and there is nowhere for one speck of doubt or dualism to be inserted.

If we can realize this place we are together with the heavens and the earth. We are one and the same with God, and there is nothing to be afraid of. This is the state of mind of "The person of value is the one who has nothing to do," where we offer ourselves up completely. That life energy of the heavens and the earth is the energy with which we live, as it is.

At the end of the year we hang this calligraphy in the tea room for the last tea ceremony of the year. It is as if to say that we were able to live in this way through the year.

When Shido Munan Zenji was consulted by a very impoverished person who told a long story of suffering, he replied, "Throw away that suffering." When a high-ranking person came and told Shido Munan about his many successes, he told him to throw away his happiness. To not be caught on suffering and not be caught on happiness is the state of mind of "The person of value is the one who has nothing to do."

We shouldn't live in a way that is calculated and manipulative. We can't spend all our time creating a life. Because we make mistakes and then try to make things work out the way we think is best for ourselves, we end up being deceitful. In order to cover up our deceit, we deceive even more, and both our deceits and our manipulations keep increasing in our attempt to cover them up.

We tie ourselves up doing this. We try to be so clever and then end up having to protect ourselves. Finally we have spent our entire lives covering up, but we have never actually lived. If we can live honestly, just as we are, with our faults, without decorating anything, we will have nothing to be afraid of.

The founder of Myoshinji, Muso Daishi, lived a life of true poverty. One day the rain was so heavy that it came in through all of the cracks in the roof. He called to the attendants to come and bring something to catch the rain. One attendant quickly brought a sieve to catch the rain, and he was highly praised. Another attendant who came much later because he had taken the time to look for a bucket was criticized. Muso Daishi was one who surely lived a life of "The person of value is the one who has nothing to do."



*Though
the wind blows,
the moon in the sky
never moves*

Kaze fuke domo,
dozezu tenpen no
tsuki

風吹不動天遍月

Though the wind blows, the
moon in the sky never moves
Though the snow bears down,
the pine in the valley never
breaks

These phrases from the sixteenth

volume of the *Katai Futoroku* describe that state of mind of not being moved around by anything, no matter what. No matter how cold the wind is, no matter how much snow is blowing, our mind is not moved. Like a pine standing strong, no matter what happens, we are not crushed, nor do we fall apart.

Couplet 81 of the *Dhammapada* teaches this as well:

The wind cannot shake a
mountain.
Neither praise nor blame moves
the sage.

Miyamoto Musashi lived in seventeenth-century Japan, and his profound secret of the sword was called the way of the Firmness of the Great Rock. This means that when we have gone beyond the duality of life and death, we become a state of continuous serene mind moments.

We also have the Zen phrase, "Even though the winds blow from eight directions, it is never moved." Those eight directions are the eight attitudes of an ignorant person, which include getting conceited when we are successful, getting dejected when we are failing, getting angry when we are insulted, and getting excited when we are praised.

Ignorant people are always concerned with whether they are being insulted, either behind their backs or to their faces. Their minds are moved around by this concern. They are all the more so moved around by happiness and sadness. People use up their entire lives trying to avoid pain and to have as much pleasure as possible, never having a true center but just being pushed and pulled around in this way.

No matter how much rain falls or how hard the wind blows, the rock cliff is not affected by it. Whether failing or succeeding, whether being praised or insulted, whether enjoying

or suffering, one whose mind remains unmoved is called a sage. This is what the Buddha taught.

The Firmness of the Great Rock was the profoundest secret of Miyamoto Musashi's swordsmanship. One day Hosokawa Ko asked Musashi, "How would you put this teaching into one phrase? How would you say it?" Musashi answered that this cannot be spoken in words, that you have to see the actual thing for yourself.

Musashi then summoned Terao Motomenosuke, his top disciple, and immediately ordered him, "Right now, plunge this knife into your belly." In front of Hosokawa, Musashi ordered Terao Motomenosuke to kill himself.

Motomenosuke quietly bowed and said, "Yes, I understand," and went into the next room to prepare to die. Instead of being fearful, he accepted the word of his master without the slightest instant of being moved around.

Musashi said, "That is the Firmness of the Great Rock," and it has since been described in this way.

This story may be hard for us to believe today; certainly we would consider it unacceptable in terms of human rights. But when we look at it from the point of view of the work we are given to do, we can see that sometimes we have to respond in this same way. For example, if we are working as a fireman trying to save someone trapped in a burning building, or as a soldier fighting for our country, or even as an employee in a business, we might receive an order comparable to this one.

If we are attached to our ego position, we cannot go beyond life and death. To put it a different way, the firmness of a rock can come only from being awakened to eternal life. This honest state of mind can be known only from having cut away both sides, life and death, completely. Without awakening, this state of mind cannot be clearly revealed.

Tozan said it thus: "The master swordsman is like the lotus blooming in the fire. Such a man has in and of himself a heaven-soaring spirit." This is the state of mind of zazen.

The Sixth Patriarch said, "Cutting away all connection to ideas of good and bad externally, not being moved around internally, this is samadhi." Zen is to let go of all ideas of ourselves as men or women, as young or old, as scholars or nonscholars, as rich or poor, as evil or good. Rather than being conceited about ourselves or attacking ourselves, we can see all of these things as nothing more than reflections in a mirror. This is Zen. This is what is being taught by "though the wind blows, the moon in the sky never moves." It is when we are caught on our own appearance and form that we get moved around. While being within the many forms of external reality, when we remain unattached to any of them we are in serene samadhi.

To realize Buddha Nature, that absolute natural power, is Zen samadhi. To seek Buddha Nature is not to look at each and every difference in people and be moved around by that, but to let go of it. This samadhi is itself the very wisdom that the Buddha manifested.



*There is One Thing
that runs through my
teaching*

Waga michi ichi wo
motte kore o
tsuranuku

吾道以一貫之

This line is from the teachings of Confucius known as the *Analects*.

Master Confucius said in front of a gathering of his disciples, "There is One Thing that runs through my teaching." He was saying that all of the virtues he had taught until that time were actually just one teaching.

His eldest disciple, Soji, responded, "Yes, that is so," and received the teaching.

The master left the room, and the other disciples asked Soji, "The master said that there is only one virtue, but what is it?" They were asking Soji to explain what that One Thing is.

It is said that he answered, "This one path is that of integrity and compassion. Only this."

In the written records of Confucianism, the same thing is taught. The true virtue with which we are all endowed from the beginning, our original nature, is manifested as the middle way of integrity and compassion.

The virtue with which we are endowed from birth is not the same thing as the wisdom that arises from what we think about after birth. This bright virtue is our original nature, beyond all divisions into countries, cultures, or languages. It can't be bent to accommodate just one person's wishes. It is that which applies equally to all people, that which every person will understand and agree upon. It is that in which we can take refuge because it connects all human beings.

In the text known as *The Great Learning*, Confucius wrote, "What the Great Learning teaches is: to illustrate illustrious virtue; to renovate the people; and to rest in the highest excellence." The three parts of this great learning are to clarify our bright virtue, to be one with nature, and to be intimate with God.

The goal of the great learning is to understand the nature of being human or, to put it another way, to accept all people without exception. This means to awaken to love of all humankind, to go beyond any division into good and bad and to realize the absolute purity that is within all people, to realize and rest in that state of mind of being one with all people. This is how it is taught.

The Japanese Zen Master Bankei

Zenji (1622-1693) spent his whole life teaching the Unborn Mind, teaching that this Unborn Buddha Nature is all that we received from our parents. He taught that we should live without trying to make money, but only live so that we can awaken to our Unborn Mind.

Having been taught about Confucius's bright virtue as a child, at the age of eleven Bankei began to be plagued by a doubt as to what this bright virtue actually is. As a child he would catch snakes and frogs and kill them. He would fight with his friends and take coins from his mother's wallet. No matter how he looked at it, he could not believe that he had such a splendid mind. He asked his teacher, and his teacher admitted that even though he taught about the bright virtue, he didn't know what it was either. He suggested that since Zen priests do zazen and train to get enlightened, Bankei should ask one of them.

Bankei searched and searched for an enlightened Zen master, and finally at the temple of Zuioji in Ako, when he was sixteen years old, he found Priest Umpo. Umpo said, "Even if you ask me and I tell you, you wouldn't be able to know what that bright virtue is. If I tell you it is only mental understanding, a verbal explanation. Unless you realize satori, you won't be able to know bright virtue."

"How can I awaken to that bright virtue?"

"Do zazen and look directly at your own mind."

Because he wanted so much to understand bright virtue, Bankei entered the gate of Zen. He traveled all over Japan collecting information and knowledge about meditation, but still he couldn't understand. Finally he returned to his birthplace and made a tiny hut the size of two tatami mats. He had the door barred from the outside, arranged to have his food put in through a small window, and made a hole for the removal of his

bodily waste. He made a determined vow that he would either realize satori and awaken to bright virtue or he would not leave the hut alive. This was when he was twenty-seven years old. This is where he started zazen, and with his life on the line he sat. But soon, without any exercise and without enough sleep or nutrition, he got tuberculosis. He had a high fever and coughed up great amounts of phlegm until he was sick to the point of spitting blood.

People nearby said he should quit while he was still alive, that it would be stupid to die like that, that he should come out and strengthen his body and then start again. But he had begun sitting with a resolution to break through or die and was not moved around by what people said. His tuberculosis became more and more severe. One day when he coughed, a huge plug of phlegm flew out and hit the wall in front of him. Because of his high temperature, the bloody phlegm was black and hard like rabbit droppings. It rolled down the wall and hit the floor, and at that sound he was suddenly awakened.

After seeking for so many years, the bright virtue he had not been able to clarify was understood in an instant. He asked to be let out of the hut. Although he had been unable to swallow any food for a week because he was so severely dehydrated, he put some rice gruel in his mouth. It was so delicious he was able to eat more, and his energy soon returned.

From the moment he encountered the true source of his life energy, he easily understood all of the records of the Patriarchs, the koans, and the sutras and could use them all to guide others. He had experienced the One Thing that runs through all the teachings.



*Virtue
is never without
company*

Toku, kanarazu tonari
ari

德必有隣

In the *Analects*, Confucius says, "Virtue is never without company. It will always have neighbors."

The *Vimalakirti Sutra* is representative among the many sutras of the Mahayana. In the chapter "Purification

of the Buddha-Field," first Hoshaku and then five hundred young people of high birth, as they listen to the Buddha, all give rise to their true Bodhisattva vow simultaneously in accordance with the Buddha's great virtue. They then ask the Buddha to please tell them what it means to build a Buddha Land where everyone knows peace. What kind of training can be done to create an ideal world?

The sutra states, "The Buddha said, 'Noble sons, a buddha-field of bodhisattvas is a field of living beings.'" The Buddha replies that to have an ideal society, a Buddha Land, a pure world, we must see clearly what the problems are in society. What is the source of the problems of the world, the conflicts, the poverty? Once we have looked at this carefully, the building of the Pure Land is doing what needs to be done to take away the sources of pain and suffering.

Don't think that building a Buddha Land is something you can imagine how to do all by yourself. In order to see correctly we have to look closely at human beings. Humans have a very wild aspect to them. They are selfish and careless, full of traits that must be worked with and tamed. They are like a tree that has grown in the woods; before the wood can be used, the tree needs to be planed into boards. Or they are like a big rock that has been brought down from the mountain; in order to be free of impurities, the gold extracted from the rough ore has to be worked in the forge.

What is the best way to construct society so that humans can attain their highest potential, pure and open? What is the best way for society to be so that people can awaken easily? Look at this carefully before you try to build a new one. For example, if people are always living in a world of good and bad, gain and loss, they will just compete and increase their greed and desires. They may appear to be energetic, but internally they become misdirected. They get caught on gain

and loss of what is right in front of them, and their ability to respect things and to see the essence of any given thing is lost. They become diluted, superficial people who care only about how much profit they can make. This is what happens when society is established in a mistaken way.

We need a society in which we respect in each other what is deep within us. We have to look carefully at what can be done to allow ourselves to awaken to that essence and then build the Pure Land accordingly. What kind of situation will allow all of us to do the Bodhisattva practice not only for ourselves but for all people? How can we easily live this Bodhisattva practice? We must build according to this essence. But if society is based on a conceptual ideal that ignores the nature of sentient beings, it will just be an idea floating in empty space, like a building constructed in midspace, and that is nothing but foolish.

The Buddha told Hoshaku, "Listen well and remember!" The straightforward mind is the Pure Land of the Bodhisattva. That quiet, innocent, open mind, that simple mind with which we are born, is the Pure Land of the Bodhisattva. When people think of building a Pure Land they immediately envision something with a certain form and substance. But this is not about form and substance. If the essence is clear, the form and substance will manifest naturally. The straightforward mind is the Pure Land of the Bodhisattva. If we don't have a simple mind and don't accept all people, the form will not be born; when we are clear and simple and pure, we can feel another's pain as if it is our own pain, another's joy as if it is our own joy. We are all born with this simple clear mind, and this is the Pure Land of the Bodhisattva.

Unless our own mind becomes quiet and clear, there is no way for the world to become a place of peace and clarity. Peace of mind and external peace are



not separate. Before we try to construct an external world of peace, we have to extinguish the seeds of conflict in our own heart. We have to end arguments between ourselves and others. Unless this mind of conflict is thrown away, there is no peace. We have to look within, review our own behavior, and express pure repentance, doing what is most necessary for all people and for the whole world. This is what is most important today.

The straightforward mind is, as it is, the Pure Land. To clarify to the ultimate point this correct way of being means to fulfill our character and see it clearly and know that deepest essence. Within this world based on gain and loss and the survival of the fittest, when people who aren't moved in this way gather and work to polish their character and to deepen their humanity, then all of humankind will deepen and clarify.

The *Vimalakirti Sutra* tells us that the deep mind is the Pure Land of the Bodhisattva. We are always caught by joy and anger, happiness and suffering. But that is our mind's external appearance; our deep mind is beyond those emotions. Knowing this deep mind, we can learn not to be confused by emotions, motivations, and desires but rather, while having them, to see and consider others' motivations as well.

When we suffer, we want to everyone to suffer; our misery loves company. Drowning in emotions, we spread this pain everywhere. When we try to succeed, we are used by our desires and don't care if the people around us suffer. This is not deep mind. Our deep mind sees everyone's happiness; it forgives and accepts all people. Where this deep mind is being expressed, people of virtue gather.

When we vow to throw ourselves away completely, when our Bodhisattva vow is firm, our mind is this Pure Land. As we put more energy into fulfilling that vow, our essence will naturally allow others to awaken to the same vow to liberate all beings. People will see us

and think, "If they can do it, so can I," and more and more the Buddha Land will be built.

In this world we can't own anything; we are just caretakers for the things in our possession. When we realize this, we offer everything we have to those who are sad and suffering and far from comfort. This deep mind is the mind that wants to give whatever it can, and right there is the Pure Land. Where that essence is abundant and clear, sentient beings will gather and a Buddha Land will be built. The Pure Land can be brought about through the energy of one person's deep vow, which then brings many others to know the same vow. This is how it works. This is the teaching of the *Vimalakirti Sutra* and the meaning of "Virtue is never without company."

World peace and an ideal society are realized through each and every person offering a pure, simple, and open mind to society. The Mahayana state of mind is manifested in this way.



*The Great Way leads
to the capital*

Daidō Chōan ni tsūzu

大道透長安

This phrase is from the *Records of Joshu*. It tells us that all of the roads in the heavens and on earth lead to the capital, to the emperor's palace, meaning that everywhere we go we find our true nature, without exception.

One day a monk came to Joshu and asked, "What is the Way?"

Joshu answered, "The path? It is just outside the fence."

The monk continued, "Not that path, the Great Way, what is that?" Because the monk had been told that the path was on the other side of the fence, he tried again and said, "I am not asking about such a small path. I am asking about the Great Way."

Joshu said, "The Great Way leads to the capital." These were his words.

The capital at that time was Chōan, today's city of Xian. Historically, it was the emperor's residence during the Kan Dynasty and the political center of China through the Kan and Sung Dynasties. It was also where the Silk Road began. During Emperor Genso's reign its population was one million, making it one of the greatest cities of the world.

From Chōan, the emperor's orders were delivered to many states and principalities. The emperor's power was expressed by the many messengers who traveled widely, taking his words to others around the world and returning with their responses. In the same way it was said that all roads lead to Rome, many roads from all of these remote areas led to Chōan.

Sojo Hoshi was one who clarified the path. His words, "One who clarifies the ultimate Way is one of enlightenment," have the same meaning as "The Great Way leads to the capital." There are many teachings, and the highest teaching of all is the one that says that all beings are from the origin Buddhas. This is the path of living in accordance with our Buddha Nature.

In the *Hanshu zanmai Kyo Sutra* it's taught, "There is no liberation without the Path of the many Buddhas; without the Path there is no way to realize satori."

This Path is pure and unsoiled. The

true Way is to live in accordance with our Pure Mind. Those who live in this way are considered to be living the Great Way. Our five senses--seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching--and our consciousness are all empty if our mind is pure. When our mind is clear, our eyes are not confused by seeing too many things, our ears are not confused by hearing too many sounds, our nose is not tempted by multitudes of smells, and our mouth is not tempted by various tastes. The external world is called the world of the six dusts. But no matter what the temptations of that world are, the mind that is pure will not become clouded by external dusts. Those who live this pure way are realizing the Great Way, the all-embracing way. Thus it is written in the *Hanshu zanmai Kyo Sutra*.

"Realize it to this point," it says.

In Buddhism the mind is the Path. Zen is the flow of mind, and mind is the body of Zen. This mind is not the thoughts of our ego, but the depth beyond all ego, where we are clear and pure and empty of stains. This is the Way.

The Great Way is this pure mind. This true base is immense beyond measure and has infinite functioning as well. That which is functioning surges forth full and taut, completely pure, beyond name or form. It can't be said to exist, and it can't be said not to exist. It has no thoughts in its mind and nothing to say with its mouth; free of ideas, it matches perfectly with each moment's encounter. It comes from a pure source and only speaks what is necessary with no idea of having spoken. If we realize this way of being completely, we are advanced followers of the Way.

Our minds are filled with various experiences and ways of seeing. We see the flowers and hear the birds through the filters of dualism and preconception. As a result, we don't see clearly; everything is colored by our ideas of gain and loss. Because we see and hear within the context

of our own experiences, processing everything through our favorite dualistic views, we don't see clearly.

If we throw away all of our dualistic knowledge, holding on to nothing at all, then the mind with which we were born, this most advanced functioning, is found. The mind of not holding on to anything perceives the world directly. No matter what we see, it's new, fresh, and true. Everything we see is beautiful.

The Tendai sect teaches that if in our pure awareness we don't hold on to anything at all, we match perfectly with the external world; when we connect to the world exactly as it is, then that which sees and that which is being seen match perfectly.

In all the boundless realms of space not a single hair can be inserted.

From the ancient past to the limitless future we are never separated from this very moment.

This is how the ancients saw. From here the world is born and our life is born. Because in our subjectivity we hold on to nothing whatsoever when we connect with the objective, it is the world of one being. When our clear mind moments become one with the world, our mind and the world are one; no matter what we see, it is truth, and it is Buddha. We know, "The Great Way leads to the capital."

The small road in the countryside, the path of the loggers in the woods, the wide highway, and the all-embracing Great Way all lead to Chōan. This is not a path of form but the path of our mind, the pure, unstained way that joins all the myriad things. If we know this path of mind, everything we see and hear is the Buddha Land. Everything is the truth of the Buddha.

The Buddha said, "How wondrous! How wondrous! All beings are

endowed from the origin with this same bright clear mind to which I have just awakened!" This is that very place. Zazen is done to manifest this pure mind, touching directly the state of mind of "The Great Way leads to the capital."



彩鳳舞丹霄

*A radiant phoenix
dances
in the sunset sky*

Saihō, tanshō ni mau

彩鳳舞丹霄

Rinzai Zen's Goso Hoen Zenji was the disciple of Hakuun Shutan Zenji, from whom he received transmission. He then taught for forty years, gathering disciples and cultivating students who



看脚下

Watch your footsteps

Kan kyakka

看脚下

realized great awakening.

Yet at that time there were many who were superficially enlightened, who were attached to a particular view of Buddha and of Dharma. The true freedom of Zen was missing, and there

were few who were able to bring the actual wisdom to people of training. This was a matter of great grief, and to resolve this problem Goso Hoen introduced the stages of practice known as arrival at the principle, functioning, and advanced practice. These were introduced to koan Zen to revitalize it.

Those who do zazen and are able to forget their body and forget their thoughts even to a small degree often mistakenly think that, because they've entered samadhi, they've resolved everything. They think they are completely full of the wisdom of the Buddha and, with this mistaken view, don't work to bring forth the true wisdom necessary for everyone in society. Thinking that they've realized all the wisdom there is, they don't attempt to see society correctly. Caught in their own point of view and thinking no one else is as advanced as they are, they misunderstand, and their path becomes more and more confused. Unless they have a teacher who knows how unripe they still are, this kind of poison gets spread into the world.

It is essential for each and every one of us to work on what is still insufficient in our understanding, realizing the correct wisdom and then going into society to liberate those who are suffering. It was for deepening this motivation that koan Zen was brought into being.

In his later years, the teacher of the Sixth Patriarch, Goso Gunin Zenji, lived on Yellow Plum Mountain. Goso Hoen received his name because he lived there too and had a karmic affiliation with Goso Gunin. In addition to the Rinzai sect, the Soto sect and the Oryo sect in Japan can be traced back to Goso Hoen Zenji.

Among his many students, three were especially illustrious, Bukan Zenji, Butsugen Seion Zenji, and Bukka Kokugon Zenji, who later was given the honorary name Engo by the emperor. One day these three

students were with Goso Hoen in the mountains. Amid the exquisite scenery, they were conversing passionately about the Dharma, until without their even noticing it, it became dark. They lit a candle and were about to start down the mountain when a sudden gust of wind blew out the candle and it was again dark.

Hoen Zenji said to them, "At this very time, speak one word of Dharma of this state of mind." Each spoke, with no hesitation, able at any time and at any place to speak the truth of the moment.

First, Bukan Zenji said, "A radiant phoenix dances in the sunset sky."

He was unable to see anything in any direction, yet in the midst of the darkness a great golden sun shone, the samadhi of bright light. This was the golden phoenix dancing so beautifully one could hardly look at it, transforming the darkness into a samadhi of great light. To not be able to see is to see. Only someone who has the deepest experience could instantly answer like this, could know unfettered freedom, not bound by the surroundings in any way.

Next, Butsugen said, "The iron snake lies across the old road."

This is the state of mind of throwing away all of our personality and ego identity. It is to be without any idea of a small self, without one idea of being a person or a soul or a living creature that has no need to make any efforts to realize the highest character with which we all are endowed. It is not about going after results, nor being trapped by an idea of who we are; rather, it is letting go of our conditioned thinking and patterns. When we can realize that ultimate point of no self and no other, everything we see, hear, and know is the land of the Buddha and Bodhidharma.

Finally, Kokugon Zenji said, "Watch your footsteps!"

Goso Hoen Zenji responded,

"Kokugon will destroy my sect."

This is an example of how in Zen we compliment someone by insulting them. Bukan and Butsugen had realized an advanced state of mind, but they were still in some way self-consciously aware of the Dharma. It could be said that they were still within that frame. This was the first time that Kokugon had gone beyond that frame and expressed the deepest, most profound place with one phrase.

For those who are awakened in what they see and what they hear, there is nothing that is not truth. Don't look away from it!



*All things
return
to the One*

Manbō ichi ni kissu

萬法歸一

Joshu was asked by a monk, "All of the myriad existences return to the absolute One, but to where does that One return?"

All things return to that ultimate One,

but that One--to where does it return? Does it return to the one of God? To Amida Butsu's one? To the one of the Buddha ocean? To the one mind that is all of us? Many people of religion will open their mouths and without fail offer an answer of this sort. But where does this ultimate One go? It is a demanding question, and the monk who asked this of Joshu was not a common person of training. He was not caught on this statement's easy flow, and there are not so many who could have answered him.

Daito Kokushi said, "For thirty years or so I, too, dwelled in the fox's cave. No wonder people still get bewitched." If we do even a little zazen we know this place where "all things return to the One," but we can't stop there, thinking that emptiness or an absolute is all there is. Where does the One return to? If that is not clear, then our Zen is poison, separated from the actual world, a nihilistic trap in which all of humans' abundant, creative capability is lost. Far too many people are offering this kind of Zen in the world today.

The monk's question was prodding at this, and he would not accept anything other than a true answer.

Joshu answered, "When I was in Seishu I made a hemp vest. It weighed seven hundred grams."

Seishu is Joshu's hometown, and while there he had made a vest. "Recently I went back to my hometown and made a vest that weighs about 700 grams; it is very light and has a good feeling to it."

This is like a conversation between a grandson and a grandfather who is a little deaf. Where in Joshu's response is there an answer to the monk's question? Didn't Joshu hear him? It is as if he's answering a totally different question. He seems to be completely out of it, but this is in fact a splendid response to the question at hand.

It's said that our mind is our activity and our ability. As Rinza Zenji put it,

"In our eyes it becomes seeing, in our ears it becomes hearing, in our nose it becomes smelling, in our mouth it becomes tasting, in our hands it becomes touching, in our feet it becomes movement. See it! See it!" It's always functioning vividly, right here and now! Grab it as it is!

All things return to the One.
To where does the one return?

If we get caught on another's words we'll be dragged down into a game of words and explanations. In Zen, experiencing the great death and being reborn is what is most important, and that's what is being expressed here. This isn't a concept of how everything is all one nature. Only one who has died completely without leaving even the slightest trace can touch this world's true actuality and know the great amazement and wonder.

To directly know how everything we see and hear is all truth, we have to walk the ground ourselves and know that purity prior to the ego and habitualization, prior to our birth, and even prior to our heredity. Rinza called it the true person of no rank. This which is not pulled around by anything is "All things return to the One." It is this mind that imagines everything in existence, that becomes the actuality.

If Joshu had said, "That's the one!" he would have been completely tangled up in the monk's question. As long as we are describing and explaining it, it's still only something borrowed. We have to know that refreshing clarity where all dualism and explanation ends. This is the mind of Zen. It's not possible without experience.



道

指

人

心

Point directly to Mind

Jikishi ninshin

直指人心

It's not clear what exactly happened at Shorinji in China, or when. It's said that it was the ninth of December when Eka wanted to meet Bodhidharma and ask about his Mind, but Bodhidharma ignored Eka and continued his zazen, facing the wall without turning





*See your true self
and realize
Buddha nature*

Kenshō jō butsu

見性成佛

around. As Eka waited, darkness came and snow began to fall. Eventually the snow was up to Eka's knees, but he remained standing, without moving.

When the night was over Bodhidharma

turned and spoke to him for the first time. "Why are you standing there in the snow?"

"For the Dharma. Great Master, please give me your compassion, open your Dharma gate, and liberate the sentient beings," Eka begged in tears.

The Buddha's incomparable teaching, the path of awakening, can't be taken lightly. It's attained by diligence in the difficulties of practice and by enduring that which is difficult to endure. You mustn't care even if you lose your life. You have to do the practice and do things that most people can't do, to be willing to throw yourself away completely, beyond your imagined potential. Then you can know a tiny bit of that state of mind. It can't be done with a small mind, conceptual knowledge, or a conceited attitude. If you think you know something, you won't be able to realize this mind.

Why was Eka carrying a sharp knife? It's said that he took the knife and cut off his left arm at the elbow. Then he held the bloody arm out to Bodhidharma to show him that he was ready to sacrifice his life.

Of course, it can't be known if this story is true, but it's indicative of the sincere mind with which Eka sought the Way. Not moved by human emotions and dualistic ideas, he expressed the truth. Then he asked, "May I ask about the enlightenment of all of the Buddhas?"

Bodhidharma answered, "The mysterious subtle Dharma of the Buddhas is not something you can learn about by asking other people. You must inquire within." This is a very strict answer. The essence of the Buddha's awakening is not about knowledge. Thinking you can receive it through information is a big mistake. It's not something you can understand by just asking and listening. When you've completely thrown away your ego and small self, when everything within, every last speck of thought, has been let go of, then for the first time you'll be able to receive that

which surges forth freely from within.

Eka pushed further. "This disciple cannot know any security or repose, please bring peace to my heart." He was saying, "I am not in a stable frame of mind; I can't realize the state of mind of all of the Buddhas and know true peace. If I can't ask you to tell me the enlightenment of all of the Buddhas, won't you please relieve that insecurity in my heart so I can know peace?"

Eka had studied Confucianism and Taoism and knew their doctrines exhaustively, but because he still couldn't realize peace of mind he had traveled a great distance to meet Bodhidharma. How much suffering Eka had been through just to be able to ask this question! Having sought the true Way, he was confused and miserable; having studied philosophy to its ultimate point, he had discovered there was a place where even philosophy couldn't liberate him. He was now standing on the razor's edge. When he finally understood that peace couldn't be found through philosophy and scholarly searching, he could begin.

People talk about the Dharma and the 5,049 sutras, and there are all sorts of philosophies and doctrines in the world, but none will reach this ultimate point. For each and every person, true peace has to be known from the very bottom of the heart. If we can't embrace this place, our struggles in life are without essence. Without true peace, we can't know the essence of the Buddhadharmas.

"My mind can find no relief. Please liberate me." It took a depth of experience make this request, and Eka's willingness to put his life on the line is evident here.

"Bring me that mind that can't find relief, and I will pacify it for you."

Bodhidharma wasn't playing with words. He could see that Eka was sincere and desperate in his questions. Eka had come to the end of what

could possibly be said with words, and Bodhidharma saw this clearly and gave the last slash.

Uprooted completely, Eka's essence was crying out. No longer under the influence of his own thoughts and dualistic ideas, he had gone beyond reasoning, beyond any mental concept of a mind as something that can be found by looking for it, and was able to offer it, exactly as it is.

Bodhidharma said, "'Bring me that mind that can't find relief, and I will pacify it for you."

Eka replied, "I can't do that. It can't be found."

Bodhidharma said, "See? I have pacified it." It isn't there; it is NOT THERE! If you see this, if you truly understand it, you will know true peace and the end of all doubt. That place where there is not a thing to hold on to, nothing to seek, nothing to clutch: here is true peace.

Eka understood completely.

This is a very severe encounter between teacher and student. But compassion courses through it. This has to be seen. This is the birth of one Buddha, the awakening to the deepest truth. Eka sought the truth of Bodhidharma's essence and was willing to offer his arm. That is how pure one has to be to understand the great teaching of Bodhidharma.

Point directly to Mind,
See your true self and realize
Buddha nature.

To know that place where nothing can be inserted is to know the truth. There is no room here for reasoning and dualism. When Eka received that whole mind just as it is, when he knew directly that "it's right here," he knew that true mind for himself.



*Round
like the great void,
it lacks nothing,
and has
nothing in excess*

Madokanaru koto
taikyo no gotoshi,
kakuru koto naku,
amaru koto nashi

圓同大虚無欠無餘

This phrase is from the *Kozen Gokokuron*, the writings of Eisai Zenji, considered the founder of Japanese Rinzai Zen.

The Heart Sutra opens with "Maka Hannya Haramita Shingyo." Thus, it

begins with *Maka*. When the *Heart Sutra* was first translated from Sanskrit into Chinese kanji, the translator, Genjo Sanzo, said that there are seven words in it that couldn't be translated. *Maka* is one of the seven, and for this reason we still say it as it was said in India.

This poem by Eisai Zenji expresses the meaning of *Maka*:

Oh great all embracing mind!
Round like the great void,
it lacks nothing
and has nothing in excess.

It is impossible to measure the
height of heaven
but Mind is above heaven.
It is impossible to measure the
thickness of the earth,
yet Mind is below the earth.

The radiance of the sun and the
moon is never exhausted
yet Mind is the source of the
radiance of the sun and moon.
The four seasons dance in
accordance with us,
the sun and the moon turn
within us.

Oh great all embracing mind!

This word *Maka* means big, abundant, superior, advanced. It's represented with a letter that means big, in the sense of the essence that includes all of existence, the whole universe, all of humankind, and the person we are as one. It's so huge we can't measure the breadth of the heavens or the thickness of the earth that it holds. It's so huge it can't fit into space. To realize this enormous Mind is Zen.

This is the huge Mind to which the Buddha awakened, but it isn't limited to the Buddha. We are all endowed with this same great Mind. It is so huge, it encompasses the whole universe. It extends to all things and all people from all times. It is like the bright moon in the sky, whose light is

reflected in the oceans, rivers, lakes, and ponds and also in the morning dew on the leaves. Wherever there is water, the moon is reflected. We ignorant beings, each of us, are as huge as the Mind of the Buddha. To awaken to this is the wisdom of Prajna. This is each person's Zen awakening.

When the Buddha was awakened to this penetrating wisdom, he said, "How wondrous! How wondrous! All beings are endowed from the origin with this same bright clear mind to which I have just awakened!" We all have received this huge mind, which is our Buddha Nature and the Buddha's most advanced state of mind. Although we try to speak about it, our original mind can't be compared with anything; it's the vastness of the universe and includes everything existing in the universe as well. It's because *Maka* contains all of these meanings that it can't be limited to a static meaning or word. This great all-embracing mind is that encompassing mind of the word *Maka*.

Our mind is empty and huge and *maka*, but if we just realize this with our heads there is no meaning to it. Each person has to firmly and surely realize it with the whole of their being, and for this we practice zazen. Because the Buddha received it with his whole being it could be said that "in all the heavens and all the earth, there is only One," not as a concept but from actuality.

We cry out when we are born with a huge voice, holding back nothing; with everything we have we offer that great birth cry. We don't discriminate because our parents are foolish or poor. We all roar the same huge cry with the birth of that life energy. This cry isn't from mental understanding but from the deep realization of our whole being that in the heavens and in the earth there is only one of us. Ikkyu Zenji was writing about that life energy when he said, "How sad! Year after year the young gain more knowledge, and year after year they move further

away from Buddha Mind."

As we become filled with social knowledge and dualism we forget that powerful life force with which we are endowed. Our Mind becomes ever smaller. But this huge true Mind is not diminished one bit. This actual essence, splendid and magnificent, which loses nothing to the heavens and earth, is what we all are.

It is said that for Einstein what was most amazing about the universe was that humans can understand. Our mind is one with the whole universe. That infinite Mind of infinite size can understand even the subtlest of truths. In each footstep and in every hand motion, it can function without being shaken or moved around by anything.

Bowing under the high sky,
treading carefully on the
ground.

Our mind becomes larger and at the same time more subtle in its functioning.

In the Tokugawa era the very famous Master Bankei said that the *Heart Sutra* is not something that Buddha or Bodhidharma has made but instead is that which each and every person has from the origin, with no beginning and with no ending. It fills all the ten directions and is found in all the grasses, trees, and flowers, without any ignorance or enlightenment.

If we say we always have it, that becomes a condition; yet if we say we are without it, that is a negation. If we call it the Buddha, then it becomes the Buddha view; if we call it all sentient beings, it is limited by that definition. So how can we say it? Any way we can define it is incorrect. Adjectives and examples and dualistic descriptions are all mistaken. Without name, without form, not having or not having, beyond thinking, not limited to the era of a Buddha, not

limited to "no form" or "no thought" or "no activity," it has to be that place beyond any such dualism. Only when all such dualism has been thrown away is it *maka*.

Because *maka* cannot be expressed, we use the word mind to name it. If there were no such word as mind, there would have been no way to put it. To praise this place where there is nothing at all, we express *maka* as the letter for "big." But if we think there is some large mind somewhere, that is already delusion.

If we carefully, creatively, and compassionately look at this, the letter for "big," this true way of being of the Buddha, we can see that Bankei Zenji is kindly speaking of this great, all-embracing Mind.

