

曹源一滴水

Number 77

February 2008

From Shodo Harada Roshi, Abbot of Sogenji, Okayama, Japan

NEW YEAR 2008,

This is the first message for this new year. It is already the end of February as I write this. Last month we had the official changing of temple positions and from the sixth of February we had the first Osesshin of this training period. After finishing the Parinirvana ceremony, on the fifteenth of February, we went immediately to the sesshin at Tahoma Sogenji and right now 52 people are sitting this sesshin.

In January, at the end of the month, at the zendo of Hokuozan Sogenji in Germany, there took place a sesshin of members from all over Europe. Nearly fifty people gathered and did a one week sesshin. From there, it was on to Italy, to the Palermo zendo in Sicily. There is now already in this new year many sesshins happening at these various places and people are working and deepening with intensity.

From Okayama, on the 15th of February, a group from Sogenji's Sunday Zazenkaï went to India to visit the children living at India Sogenji in Bijapur. There are now forty children attending the Buddhist school. Also the group pilgrimaged to the various sites of the Buddha's life and directly received that deep karmic affiliation.

In India the children's education was one of their many activities. These children who are not usually blessed with many opportunities, are given a place to train and receive education. The Okayama zazenkaï members who wanted to see this for themselves went to visit their place in India this February.

Annually in August, for the past six years, many young people gather at the temple for sesshin. From India Sogenji this year there will be a young man raised in India who will come to Sogenji to train and live in Sogenji to become an established and well-trained young monk and then return to India to help with the work of Bodhi Zenji.

In Europe at Sogenji Hokuozan, Sho-e Daishi who has done this training for a long time as her deep source, is now bringing forth many karmic affiliations. For the third time, people from various zen places

in Europe gather and do sesshin at Hokuozan. In Switzerland Esho, Shinden, Jigen koji, all are training and cultivating other supporters. In Poland, Kanzen Osho, and Genyu, and many very enthusiastic people of training are deepening their practice in their daily life and in these ways the One Drop activity manifests. In Denmark, there are several groups and they were the earliest in karmic affiliation for zazen. A very healthy Sangha in Hungary has many young people training alongside with those of experience - who teach them well. In Latvia as well there is an active OneDrop Zendo. In Italy, in Palermo, on Sicily there is a zendo and from 20 to 30 people are doing zazen there as well.

At Tahoma Sogenji in America, Ekei Zenji is taking the responsibility of head monk. At the neighboring Enso House hospice, Dr. Ann has for five years, with deep experience, taken care of terminally-ill people at this important time of their lives. By being at Enso House, they are receiving their life's ending comfortable and supported.

All over the world people who have trained at Sogenji, are now expressing their functioning. Sozui Zenni is now in Munchen where she is making efforts to create a new zendo. These are all people who trained at Sogenji and have now returned to their area of origin and are deepening their understanding of what they have been taught and teaching others. In our life the training time is of great importance and to have a life with that as our most essential source, then we can offer something to others and receive the true joy of life by fulfilling this. This is training.

Once each year at Sogenji, we hang the scroll of the Buddha's passing into Parinirvana. The one at Sogenji is a very famous scroll, it is ten meters high and five meters wide. It truly fills the whole hondo when it is hung in the front. At Sogenji most people have seen this at least once. Made in 1600 by Tano Ippa. Okayama's daimyo Tsuna Masako received this treasure for Okayama.

It is painted in great detail and a huge scale. It shows the Buddha who at the end of his life, was joined by many as he lay down. All of his disciples grieved in suffering and sorrowing and along with them, all

around him the Buddha, many animals and insects and creatures came as well, to grieve over the passing of the Buddha.

We cannot know whether this scene actually happened but in this one generation, the awareness that all beings have Buddha Nature was clarified. Sentient Beings are From the Origin Buddhas. When we look at the point of human beings we will always see the expression of Buddha nature, and here, all of the animals are also expressing this same great compassion.

At the end of his life the Buddha said that he had saved everyone that he could save, and left the karmic affiliation for all others. In this way he spoke his last words, saying that all beings have to be liberated. The Buddha's clear faith and deep vow to awaken people gave birth to his abundant life.

We see the scroll of the Buddha entering into Parinirvana and we can see shown how at any time we should always maintain our empathy for all living things. In this life, that is our true way of living, and if we live in this most necessary way, then we will be sent off by all beings at the end of our life as well. This is the ideal life, it is pictured in this scroll of the Buddha passing into Parinirvana. We're shown humans best way of being no matter where and what we have to do. What is important is to live a life with empathy for all living things.

The Buddha awakened and said that this deep profound mind which has now been entered, no one else can understand. "Now that I am in this place of peace I will enter Nirvana and not be any longer caught on thoughts".

Hearing this, the heavenly gods said, "This is terrible! One who now knows the ultimate truth! If he does not teach that to even one person then the path which the Buddha has now awakened to and opened, will be left unused! He cannot go off into nirvana or for eternity that truth will be unused. Humankind needs this more than anything else right now, in this time of great pain, and if the Buddha enters nirvana now, living beings will be forever unsaved." At the very feet of the Buddha, the gods entreated the Buddha to please save all beings. Then the Buddha came down from his meditation seat. For three weeks he sat and considered how to teach in a way that people would understand, while sitting, and meditating while walking, he aligned his awakening and thought how to bring this to other humans.

His results of that effort were "The Four Noble Truths":

1. Suffering and self view
2. Grasping is suffering.
3. The truth of impermanence.
4. The path to right understanding is The Eightfold

Path:

1. Right View
2. Right Intention
3. Right Speech
4. Right Action
5. Right Livelihood
6. Right Effort
7. Right Mindfulness
8. Right Concentration

Buddha first went and liberated his five friends at the Deer Park. He taught them the Four Noble Truths. From then for forty nine years he taught without ceasing and finally by the Hiranyavati River he gave his final teaching, the Yuigyo sutra. In the Yuigyo sutra it writes that he lifted his heavy head and said to his disciples, "Do you have any questions about the Four Noble Truths that I taught? If you do, then ask them now. The disciple Aniruddha responded, "Even if the sun gets cold and the earth gets hot, we will not let go of this truth as the ultimate truth which does not change, I believe this deeply. Please be assured". Hearing this, the Buddha said "Good. I will now enter nirvana."

The four noble truths and eightfold path are the backbone of the teaching of the Buddha. He taught that these four were applicable to everyone and anyone can relate to and understand them. There is nothing greater than these truths.

The First Noble Truth teaches that in this world, although there are some happy times and places in a life, everyone who is born comes in crying, life is suffering, this is an actuality. The pain of being alive, of being sick, of being confused, and the pain of being elderly - the 'winds' here are so severe.

Everyone wants more happy times but the Buddha said, this world is a place of suffering and we have to know this. People say both that these pains in life have to be lived but also that they want to go against that. How is our reality our actuality? While everyone seeks joy and happiness, everyone is also deeply anxious and unstable in mind. Will I die first or who will go next? We have to separate from a person we love and we have to live close to someone whom we don't get along with at all, we have great desires and never really get what we want.

There are so many pains and discomforts that are ongoing and constant so what do we do about it? We look at its source and what is that source? Buddha was always very rational, like a doctor who looks at the source of the sickness. What is that source of our pain? It comes because we gather and accumulate; things, possessions, knowledge, we gather them and get sad when we lose them. If we look at this we see that the whole of life is spent suffering in this way.

So why do we gather? We gather because we have a pointless desires through our ego. To be free from that ego is our liberation, where we can extinguish all desires. We can go beyond birth and death. In the morning we wake in the huge mind of the Buddha, at night we receive the huge mind of the Buddha and sleep, this is the eternal peace in which there is no need to be suffering and this is the ultimate world of the Buddha.

The Eightfold Path stands on the Four Noble Truths. The Buddha taught this from his own experience. If we have that goal, how can we enter that state of mind?

1. Right View, to have a truthful seeing eye with which we see the world.
2. Right Intention, not to have extra thoughts and get confused by them.
3. Right Speech, to not lie, to not be hypocritical, to not say unnecessary things that confuse people.
4. Right Action, to not kill life, to not steal, to observe precepts.
5. Right Livelihood, to live in a correct way, working in a way that does not harm.
6. Right Effort, in living our life or for following the Buddha's way, to not be lazy.
7. Right Mindfulness, to have a mind that is not moved around by the many things.
8. Right Concentration, to not hold anything in mind, to be like a baby's state of mind.

These are the eightfold path, to live in this way from our true mind is the way to enter nirvana and is the way to liberation. To know actual joy and live a joyful life, for that we see how well this needs to be lived. This Path teaches the way of cause and effect.

The first thing the Buddha taught was the creating of the universe and the way of the wheel of the six incarnations. This is to teach us to not be greedy and gather so many things since this is the source of pain in life. The eight fold path is the true way to enter nirvana and is the way to liberation.

In earlier Buddhism it was the practice to follow a teacher and actualize these truths of the eightfold path, to honor Shakyamuni, to honor the Sangha and all those who follow this teaching. Sangha is a plural word, not just one ordained person but whenever there are three or more. To support each other and to cooperate with each other, this is to honor the Sangha.

To honor the three treasures is the way to live correctly and to clarify and purify. Namu Shakamuni Butsu means to honor the first person to pass this truth to us, to live abundantly in clear mind moments, to help each other and realize that this very place is the land of lotuses. Where is there any greater teaching for

confused and deluded people in this world than this - that deluded and ignorant people are Buddha? The Buddha taught his disciples directly in the writings of the Dhammapada, in stanza number 294 there are the strong words:

“Having slain mother (craving) and father (conceit) and two warrior kings (views based on eternalism and nihilism), and having destroyed a country (sense-avenues and sense-objects) together with its revenue officer (attachment), ungrieving goes the Brahmana (Arahant).

Having slain mother and father and two brahmin kings, and having destroyed the perilous path (hindrances), ungrieving goes the Brahmana (Arahant).”

These are the words of the Buddha which may not even seem like the Buddha spoke them because they are so strong. Parents killing their children and children killing their parents, couples killing each other, we see it all over the papers today!

Yet, these words of the Buddha are not literal. They are about our state of mind and our conceptual attachment. That is what is meant by mother and father here. We are always being run by our ego, and while we are taught to cut that ego and its hold on us, we are still full of thoughts coming from our deep unclear ignorance. In Buddhism this is called the collective unconscious where all of the previous awareness comes forth as ego. But it is not an actuality, instead to have this deep storehouse of unconscious mistakes all bubbling and blinding us from within is the deep ignorance. This is within each of us and we have to bring forth new, fresh awareness so we can purify this deep soil. Only then clarify this ego hold over us. We have to cut away our mozo and see beyond form, to our experience of our clear mind, this is Zen. To cut through that collective unconsciousness and cut the roots of desire and see our pure clear mind in our everyday life, this is to kill the father.

To always be greedy and wanting something and coveting others things, like the mother who wants only her own child's safety. Instead, pray for all beings and their truth and clarity, cut through the concept which is the mother, that attachment of greedy desire. - without that how peaceful one would be!

The two kings (views based on eternalism and nihilism) are the ideas of there being a soul and the idea of their being only emptiness when we die. To not be caught in an idea of a soul nor on an idea of there being nothing after death, to not be caught on either of these. They are both extreme views. If we think that there is nothing after death we think we can do whatever we feel like when we are alive. If we think the opposite, then we think we have a soul and are always attached to that

idea, and either of these are extreme and need to be cut away completely.

That world of the six senses and also of our entrances to our senses, these are only a borrowed world and they are empty in actuality. As it says in the Heart Sutra, "no eyes, no ears no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind"

If we see this clearly and correctly we see that everything is emptiness and we do not get caught on a subjective nor an objective point of view. We can let go of all attachments of our ego and desires and ideas, and our attachment to our senses and to both subjective and objective, and then be free from all suffering. We can then be in peace. This is what is taught here.

To not do bad things,
To do good things,
To hold a clear mind precious.
These are the teaching of the Buddha.

These are the basic Buddhist views. Human's mind is, in its essence, originally like a mirror, pure and bright. In Buddhism they call this the pure, clear mind of each person, it is pure and clear from the origin without dualistic mental ideas. All people are endowed with this from the origin and this is the all-embracing, great, clear, mirror-like wisdom. This is just like the universe full and reaching everywhere, like a round, great all-embracing mirror, this is the mind with which we are born, and our true humankind source.

If a man is sitting in front of a mirror, the mirror becomes a man. It is the same with a woman or old person or a child, the mirror becomes what is sitting in front of it, precisely. There is no difference between ourself and another when we are like a mirror, because the person's face is our face, because the mirror has no personal face of its own. There is no small me only a huge pure mind which is the mind which we all have to have. In the mirror if a person weeps, the mirror weeps too, the mirror laughs and shares the person's joy and sadness equally. This is the way of a mirror, a pure bright way of being, where there is no difference between self and other.

This is the actuality of the Buddha dharma where we make our joy their joy and their suffering our own suffering. This is the compassion of the Buddha, this wisdom and compassion of the Buddha is the original mind of all humans and to realize this directly is satori. We are born with a mind that is not different whatsoever, we have been it since birth and there is nothing greater than to return to that mind. What comes forth is all good and what goes against it is evil. We can only see this when we clarify and purify this mind and that is why that purification is so very important. For doing this we do sesshin and we do zazen. We can always rely on zazen as our place of

refuge. Each day we sit quietly and align our zazen. If we put the meaning into one word, that word would be "to align", there is nothing better than this as a way of saying it. Just as it says in The Way of Zazen, to first align the body, then to align the breath, then to align the mind. These are the main points of zazen and if we align our mind then we align our shoes, we align our household, and from there this country and our world are also aligned and this is the wider meaning of zazen.

First we put our legs into position with our left leg on top of our right thigh, and our right leg on top of our left thigh, this is called the full lotus position. Since this is not so easy for a beginner, to sit in a half lotus position or on our knees is also fine. After we have folded our legs we straighten our back. The lower back is the body's fulcrum so we have to hold it forward carefully and not let it push outwards. If we sit with a sloppy positioning of our lower back, nothing comes together.

After placing our legs we align by moving our body back and forth, and then put the center in order by pushing the lower abdomen forward and settling into our tanden, the center of our sympathetic nervous system. This gives energy to this area of the tanden, called "sea of life" by the ancients in their medicinal teachings, from which important hormones are regulated,.

When our lower abdomen becomes full and taut, the ki goes throughout whole body, and our circulation is healthy. As our abdomen becomes full and taut, we do not need extra force in our lungs and chest and so our shoulders soften. We breathe easily and onto those relaxed shoulders we rest our head, tucking in our chin. The top of our head feels as if it is holding up the sky, we stretch up our spine and then, without bending our spine, we sit straight. As we get used to this we feel our weight less and less and as we align our whole body, we feel our ki is full and taut and we no longer feel our weight as heavy.

As our body is aligning. our breath aligns simultaneously. Each moment we know that mind caught nowhere. If we breathe smoothly, if our deep breath is clear, we can see this unfettered state of mind. In all aspects of our life, in our work and in everything we do with people, we must have our breath harmonious with whatever we do.

Finally, the most important of all is to put our mind in alignment, this is to think nothing at all. "To not think anything is the way to become Buddha" is the way an ancient put it. These days people are always thinking, much more than they need to. When in fact, the more thoughts we have the less we can see widely and clearly. We get overwhelmed and moved around by those thoughts and try to push them away and human relations become more and more difficult. If we can

live from fresh mind, to live and not be not thinking of anything, we will encounter people with a wide horizon.

In the most profound teachings of the path of Kendo it says when we have a serious match, to not have our mind placed anywhere, not on our own or the other persons hands or eyes or feet; or, on any idea of if we will win or lose or if they will win or lose; to not place our mind on any of these. To free up our mind and be in that state of mind of nothing, of noting not anything at all. We have to practice this every day and become skilled at this and then everyday we can use this to not think so many things. Then when we do think we will be able to use this skill.

It is not about not thinking or not having any ideas, but to see and hear and use all of our senses correctly in the middle of doing everything, in the middle of everything happening. We do not get hard and rigid but are aware and expansive. We become able to accomodate freely whatever the other person is doing. This is nothing difficult, we do it when we are driving in our daily life, we think about not a thing, not anything at all. People have accidents because we are thinking of something else and we lose our attentiveness and are slow to respond. Thinking not a thing, not anything, is to be aware in our mind of all directions and to have our ki reaching in all directions. There we become the state of mind of a clear mirror and we are in a state of mind where all of our awareness is clear. This is where direct intuitive perception occurs as well. To be one with each thing you encounter, with no division between self and others whatsoever, if we get caught on conceptualization and are stuck on thoughts then we can't do this. To be free from all of that during our whole life whether at home or work, and with all people. To become this we need to make zazen our refuge and live in a way that we do not have such confusion and delusion. Then we can offer our life to the service of all people. This is how we want to live.

Sogenji 2008 Sesshin Schedule, for information contact sogenji@po.harenet.ne.jp

January
6-10 kosesshin
15-21 osesshin
24-28 kosesshin

April
4-10 kosesshin
16-22 osesshin
25-29 kosesshin

July
4-10 osesshin
15-21 kosesshin
26-30 kosesshin

October
5-11 kosesshin
16-22 osesshin
26-30 kosesshin

February
1-4 kosesshin
7-13 osesshin
18-24 kosesshin

May
4-10 kosesshin
16-22 osesshin
26-6/1 kosesshin

August
6-20 kosesshin
17-23 kosesshin
28-9/3 kosesshin

November
8-12 kosesshin
15-21 osesshin
25-29 kosesshin

March
1-7 kosesshin
12-18 osesshin
23-29 kosesshin

June
6-12 osesshin
16-22 kosesshin
26-30 kosesshin

September
7-11 kosesshin
16-20 kosesshin
24-30 osesshin

December
4-10 Rohatsu
15-21 Osesshin
24-28 kosesshin

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address correction requested