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Wind Bell

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Cover calligraphy by
Dainin Katagiri-roshi:
The Four Vows

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INTRODUCTION

Dainin Katagiri-roshi was born in Osaka, Japan in 1928, the youngest of ten children. His grandparents on both sides were farmers. His parents ran a restaurant. They were devoted followers of the Shin school of Buddhism.

After World War II, when he was 18, he entered Taizoin, the Zen temple at Fukui and Daichō Hayashi, Abbot of Taizoin, became his master. Katagiri-roshi was ordained as a monk on October 10, 1946. Eight months later he entered Eiheiji monastery, where he stayed for three years and three months.

There he became a disciple of Eko Hashimoto-roshi, his second master, "from whom I learned how great zazen was, and from whom I understood what the practice of Dogen's Buddhism was." Hashimoto-roshi, who died in 1964, was a famous Zen Master, student of Sōtan Oka-roshi; both are known for their deep study of Dogen's *Shōbōgenzō* and strong zazen practice. In addition, Hashimoto-roshi did thorough, careful research into the origin of the traditional okesa (Buddhist robe). This Zen Master "saw deeply into Dogen's practice and wanted to follow Dogen's principle of life," Katagiri-roshi says. He served this second master as *anja* (housekeeper) for one year at Eiheiji.

After leaving the monastery he attended Komazawa University for both undergraduate and graduate study, concentrating on the teaching of Buddhism. He then worked at the headquarters of the Soto sect for three years and from there was sent to the United States, primarily to help the Los Angeles Japanese congregation.

He stayed in that city five months but feeling a need to improve his English, came to San Francisco. Here, at Sokoji Temple, he met Shunryu Suzuki-roshi. He remained in San Francisco at Suzuki-roshi's invitation, helping both the Japanese congregation and Zen Center. He was officially appointed priest for both groups in 1965.

His prior experience with Westerners was limited to the few he had met at Eiheiji and Soto headquarters. Since joining Zen Center his ability in English has improved greatly. He has introduced hundreds of Americans to zazen practice and consistently deepened his understanding of Westerners. Today many students consider him their personal teacher.

His wife Tamoe and eldest son Yasuniko, now 10, joined him in San Francisco in 1965. There is now also Ejyo, 4.

Teaching practice in America is different from what it is in Japan, Katagiri-roshi says. "The Japanese people have just traditional customs — memorial services, and so on. If I was at my temple now it wouldn't be so necessary to study Buddhism through books. In Japan, if I speak of some aspect of Buddhism logically, they don't understand. And it is pretty difficult to practice zazen every day because (you keep) very busy with the business of the temple."

Teaching Buddhism to Americans, he says, is "pretty difficult. Whatever you do you have to take full care of everything with mindful attention to your own life, to the situation of the group. . .so as to let the compassionate spirit penetrate everywhere."

To help students overcome their egoistic insistence on one-sided views and to show that the gap between student and teacher exists only in the student's perception, he frequently relates stories about his own early training. One such account is the following description of his life at Taizoin. At that time his work was taking care of the temple — cleaning, cooking, sweeping, etc. He made a great effort to anticipate his master's needs.

In the bath one day he thought, What should I do now for my master? And he asked, "Shall I wash your back?" Hayashi-roshi said "No." The next day the young Katagiri asked again, "Shall I wash your back?" Again, "No." Day in and day out they repeated this dialogue. The disciple thought, "In his mind he wants me to wash his back. Why does he answer no?" The *no* was cold, not warm-hearted. Just *no*. Because he didn't understand he simply continued to ask, Shall I wash your back? *No*. Until, exhausted, he gave up.

"One day I decided I should wash his back before I asked. So I opened the door to the bath, immediately took a towel and started to wash his back. He said, 'Oh — oh — oh!' There was no discussion 'Shall I?' and 'No'.

"Day in and day out I opened the door, took a towel and started washing his back. But I felt something unsatisfactory about it because after I finished he didn't say anything. I would just go out of the room. And I still had the question, Why did he refuse to accept my kindness when I asked 'Shall I?' That was funny.

"This practice, too, made me completely exhausted. So I asked him, Why did you refuse to accept my kindness when I asked you 'Shall I wash your back?' He said, 'You fool - you're ridiculous! Don't insert any extra thought in dealing with something.'

"Well, what is the extra thought? I thought I had kindness, nothing more. I didn't understand. For long years that was a big koan for me. Now I understand a little bit.

"When you ask 'Shall I?' before you offer to do something for some person — when you face someone and then hesitate — something is bubbling up from the bottom of your mind. The question 'Shall I?' made allusion to the fact I had an axe to grind. I expected something warmhearted, something like 'Oh, please don't worry about it — please take a rest. You work hard all day.' The ego said 'I don't want to wash your back.' But as a disciple I knew what I should do. So in my mind something fluttered: 'I have to do it, but I don't want . . .' My master knew so well what was the kindness I felt.

"The purpose of practice is to enable man to completely crush this ego. So my master refused: *No*. That's all."

Through this experience Katagiri-roshi learned "that many conceptions live together in the bedrock of my life. My kindness is not my kindness. My kindness is ego. Egoness and kindness live together, in peace, at the bottom of my mind. You can't give any name to what exists there. Are you sure it is egoness? Kindness? If you want to wash your master's back, don't say anything — start to work. Pick up the towel and start to wash. Don't deal with the superficial aspects of your life. Try to tune in to the bedrock of human life based on the truth."

As he says in the following talks, "It seems pretty difficult but it seems pretty simple. Your head makes it confused, that's all."

(In the following pages all footnotes are given by Katagiri-roshi except where otherwise identified.)



To our friend and teacher, Dainin Katagiri-roshi, we gratefully dedicate this *Wind Bell*.

Sentient beings are numberless ,
I vow to save them;
Desires are inexhaustible,
I vow to put an end to them;
The dharmas are boundless ,
I vow to master them;
The Buddha's Way is unsurpassable ,
I vow to attain it.

Shu-jo mu-hen sei-gan-do
Bon-no mu-jin sei-gan-dan
Ho-mon mu-ryo sei-gan-gaku
Butsu-do mu-jo sei-gan-jo

THE FOUR VOWS

Dainin Katagiri-roshi

December 11-15, 1970, at Tassajara

1. THE VOW

Every time a lecture ends we chant the four vows. Students often ask: is it possible to save all sentient beings, to put an end to illusions and desires? Is it possible to master the dharmas, to attain the Buddha's way?

It is natural for students to have questions like these. These questions come from the ordinary viewpoint which is based on one-sided ideas, on selfishness. We must learn what the four vows mean, how to understand them. If they are not in accord with our daily lives they are nonsense.

Today, therefore, I would like to explain what the vow is.

According to Buddhism our lives create a samsara¹ world as a result of preceding karmic lives. There are three evil paths by which we create this samsara world.

The first path is based on the illusion that the seeming is real. Ignorance creates this illusion and ignorance is very deeply rooted in the human mind. This ignorance leaves men confused and in pain. This illusion is called *bon-no* in Japanese; it fertilizes itself and creates new karma through craving and attachment.

Karma is the second of the three paths. Our karma is initiated by *samskara*²—the first movement we take as underlying essence about to become child in the womb.

The third path is suffering — pain, misery, difficulty, unease — which we experience through our karma, and which in turn continues the movement of the wheel of illusion.

It seems to human beings as if samsara is created by a destiny outside human control but if this were true, humanity would be without hope. Actually everything is the revelation of appearances which come about through the concurrence of cause and conditions. These causes and conditions can be modified and controlled by our attitude toward them.

Buddha tells us that all beings are in a state of perpetual motion and flow. He wants us to see thoroughly into this truth in order that we can proceed in our lives, with tranquillity, moment after moment. A Zen Master calls this practice "Let the flower of life assigned to individuals bloom in full revelation." Generally speaking it is called religious assurance, the relaxation of one's existence; *arjin* in Japanese, religious mind in peace.

¹ Samsara is the world as ordinary men see and experience it, the world of birth and death, desire and illusions and suffering. — Editor.

² Samskara — fourth of the five skandhas; that which gives form, formative principle; mental formations; deed; the will to live. — Editor.

To understand this truth and to live according to this understanding is to live in no-karmic life, to live without repeating the samsara state. This means to be born in this world with no illusions, karma or suffering. This life is called to live in the vow. This is the Bodhisattva's practice, to which he devotes himself, life after life. To be in this world without karmic life, to live in the vow, is called *mushin*.³

The vow is the practice of transparent introspection in our lives, the effort to improve ourselves. In Mahayana Buddhism, all of us are Bodhisattvas and all of us, consciously or unconsciously, are trying to live in the vow. But even the Bodhisattva who succeeds in living in no-karmic life also exists in this world in human form, in the form of man, in order to cultivate man.

I think I mentioned before that I used to practice gliding in high school. To ride a glider it is necessary to have one person take hold firmly of a rope behind the glider. About ten persons hold a rubber rope in front of the glider. When the rider is ready to start, he says, "My mark is the pine tree ahead" or something like that. A mark is what he is directed toward. And the person holding the rope behind the glider says, "Yes, all right." The leader makes sure that everybody is ready, and then he says, "Let's go, let's walk." And the ten students pull the rubber rope about 30 steps forward. The rider takes hold of the pole — above his head, like this — and holds it with his right hand. The person holding the rope behind the glider lets it go.

Practice for beginners was just to slide on the surface of the ground. Day in and day out we practiced sliding on the ground. But one day when I was on the glider the leader said, "Let it go", and the glider began to go up, towards the sky. As my body tipped backwards, my mark, the pine trees, disappeared. I was surprised: "Where is my pine tree? Where is my mark?" Then a very strong wind came. It frightened me into confusion, so I pulled the control lever toward me like this and then I pushed the control lever away from me like this and then. . . (boom). . . I went into the ground. I thought, something is wrong. . . but it was too late. It looked as if my mark was just like candy which is given to a crying child to stop its crying.

You know, most of us have an object outside which we expect to get — like a mark. When circumstances change, the mark disappears. Just as when the glider went up my mark disappeared. Of course, saying "My mark is the pine tree" makes me very comfortable. All I have to do is go towards that destination. But the next moment circumstances can change.

We are always chasing after this mark, this something outside. But according to Buddhism, everything exists according to the law of change, even the pine tree at which I aim. As long as we chase after objects outside ourselves, we will never get rid of our confusion. Everytime circumstances change, we will be bewildered. Then when we hit our foreheads against something, the ground or the wall, we will realize — oh, a mistake! This is karmic life — to live in karma.

But in order to live in the vow, in the no-karmic life, we must have our mark within ourselves. This mark is tranquillity. You can use any word — tranquillity, zazen, imperturbability, or calmness. If I had had calmness or tranquillity, I would have had control of the glider. But at that time I didn't have a real mark

³ *Mu* means nothing, no; *shin* means mind. — Katagiri-roshi.

within myself. That's why I made a mistake. But I didn't realize the mistake until I fell.

We should make every effort to find this mark within ourselves in our daily lives: which direction to go, what to do in the reality of the present. This effort, the constant seeking of the mark within ourselves, is called the vow. The person who seeks this mark within himself constantly, forever, is called a Bodhisattva.

When we live in the vow we constantly live *in* our lives, seeking our own true nature, the real treasure of our own house. At that time you find your life worth living. Maybe you say I find life worth living by running into Zen Buddhism. If you believe in that way, consider again. Are you sure? Maybe there is something—some object—which you expect, consciously or unconsciously, in your mind, by your intellectual sense. After you start to practice zazen you are very happy for a while. You experience wonderful things you have not experienced before. "How wonderful zazen is." But the more you practice zazen, the more you realize there is nothing to get, nothing to improve. . . neither character nor personality. Then you will be discouraged. In order to turn your practice into the power of your life is not so easy. It takes time. . . a long time.

Your practice is the end itself, because your practice is your life. Practice must be identical with your life, otherwise when you realize your progress in the practice you will be discouraged.

Each of the four vows explains how to get a taste of the vow in our daily lives. The first verse is how to make contact with all sentient beings. The second verse explains how to make contact with daily life based on ignorance, delusions, suffering and karma. The third verse is what we should learn in our daily lives, in order to live in the vow. The fourth is what there will be as we practice the first three verses.

This month (December) is the auspicious occasion when Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. This day is called, in Japanese, *jodo* — enlightenment. *Do* is, I think, *bodhi*, enlightenment. *Jo* literally means to become, or to accomplish. So *jodo* means to accomplish enlightenment. In this respect, I believe that to know something is not merely to have knowledge in your mind. To know is to accomplish, to be in touch with the reality of the present.

The vow is not to understand. The vow is to accomplish, to be in touch with the truth, with your body and mind.

Enlightenment is not an idea unrelated to daily life. Enlightenment has a close relationship with our daily life, so our effort must focus on how to make contact with truth, or our own true nature, or enlightenment, in daily life. This is the same enlightenment which Shakyamuni Buddha attained under the Bodhi tree.

2. SAVE YOURSELF FROM THE SELF

It is most important for men to stop creating the samsara world. This is the meaning of the vow. But the vow is not an idea imagined by the mind. The vow is the actual life itself. How should we make our life over into the vow? How should we bend our lives to touch our own true nature, with our whole body and mind?

Following the Bodhisattva vow completely will stop the appearance of the samsaric world. It seems pretty difficult, but it seems pretty simple. Your head makes it confused, that's all:

Sentient beings are numberless, I vow to save them.

First you should stand upright on the earth on your own feet, in the reality of the present. As long as you are in Tassajara, the purpose of your practice is to try to stand upright. You came here to stand up here.

When you sit on your round cushion, this is to stand up. But even during zazen you discriminate — always this way, that way. Dogen Zenji says throw everything away, now. Throw away the self. On the square cushion, on the round cushion. To stand upright is to stand upright with all sentient beings, not just to sit on the cushion. You have to know this reality.

Sesshin is to make the mind tranquil, by how much you can throw away. During zazen you think, "I am a bad Zen student." You are clever or you are poor or you are a bad student. That's ok. At least in zazen you should throw all that away.

Someone once asked a Zen Master, "I always throw everything away. What can I throw away?" He said, "You should throw away what you just said, 'I throw everything away.'" He said, "I have already thrown everything away. I have nothing on my back. What should I do?" He said, "If you attach to such a fact — that I have already thrown everything away — you should carry it on your back!"

You cannot simply sit with all sentient beings unless any thought can be thrown away. If you understand what you are by the practice of throwing away, you can help others, you can save all sentient beings. First you must save yourself from the self; then you can take good care of others.

To save does not mean to give candy to the crying child, some object which he expects. We are always crying and when someone gives us candy we stop. But the next moment we cry again. We believe that this "candy" saves men from suffering. Although Buddhism or Christianity or Judaism or Chinese philosophy exist as philosophies — yet a philosophy, a principle, cannot save you.

The vow is not abstract. It is not some principle extracted from human life. To live in the vow — to help others — is to awaken them from their stubbornness of ego, from their delusions, from the taste of self.

Buddha put emphasis on being considerate to others before anything else. Why? Others are entirely identical with oneself. Oneself is entirely identical with others. You must be considerate to all sentient beings as if all sentient beings were within yourself. Do not kill all beings by judging others' feelings by your own. If all sentient beings were your children, how would you take care of them? Others hold themselves beloved. One also holds oneself dear. Therefore to love oneself is to love others. Protecting oneself is the same as protecting others. The one who protects is not the self who is opposed to or conflicted with others.

When Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree he emphasized that all sentient beings attained enlightenment at the same time. Consider it again. Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment and all sentient beings attained enlightenment at the same time.

We know that we have to be considerate to all sentient beings. But seriously, in daily life, moment after moment — is it absolutely possible to give considerate sympathy to others, whatever happens? When you see someone you hate, something bubbles up from the bottom of your mind. If you meet someone you like, you enjoy talking with him, giving something, without any reward. But you don't like to give anything to the person whom you hate, even though you understand so well in your brain that all of us are friends, brother and sister, father and mother, teacher and disciple. You are the teacher or I am the student, you are the mother, I am the father. But the moment I am a teacher, my mind starts to think, "I am related to my position, I am a Zen Master. . . a Zen teacher, in the United States, not in Japan." This is true for me. It is difficult to get rid of.

That's why Buddha's statement — once I attained enlightenment all sentient beings attained enlightenment and became Buddha — is very important. You train. . . you try to know what you are, through and through. You make unflinching effort with your whole body and mind. This is practice. And at the same time this is enlightenment.

Please throw away your head trip, your food trip, whatever kind of trip you are on. You ask, "How can I throw away ideas? As long as I have a head it is impossible." There are some who pick up a piece of paper in order to take a note of memories floating across their mind during zazen. As something flashes on their mind, they say, "This is good," and write it down. It is not zazen. It is taking a note of your delusions, thoughts. Of course during zazen many things may happen. Forgotten things that happened ten years or two years ago suddenly make an appearance. In meditation your mind gets calm and unexpectedly you remember something in the past: "Oh, I forgot that a friend borrowed ten dollars two years ago. I have to tell him." Sometimes I am sitting here and something comes up in my mind that happened at Eihei-ji monastery.

Although it is difficult to throw everything away, only through this practice can you understand gradually what you are. When you understand what you are, you can enter into another's feelings. Not only a human being's feelings, but also into the feelings of all sentient beings: tables, lamps, incense stick, Buddha statue, your hair, your nose, your mouth, your round cushion.

If you think, I don't care about others, first I have to practice, and if you ignore others, it is a misunderstanding. But to save all sentient beings does not mean to save some by having a concept of self-sacrifice.⁴ We cannot practice without living together in peace, in cooperation. Primitive people tried to find

⁴ A Zen Master says, "The concept of sacrifice presupposes the division of 'I' and 'you'. But in Buddhism there is no division of 'I' and 'you'. A Buddhist sees only one unity of life which is prior to the division into 'I' and 'you'. Therefore the encounter of 'I' and 'you' is like the encounter of mother and child. The mother is not sacrificing herself for the sake of her child. On the contrary, she is taking care of her child as if she were taking care of her own life. In the Lotus sutra, the Buddha says: 'The three worlds are my possession and the sentient beings therein are all my children.' This is the fundamental spirit of Buddhism. The source of this spirit is the act of zazen." — Katagiri-roshi.

tranquillity in a quiet place, isolated from society and people. The Bodhisattva puts emphasis on living together in harmony in the world. A Shravaka devotes himself to attaining enlightenment to save himself but a Bodhisattva tries to help others, even though he himself cannot attain enlightenment.

In the *Shuryo Shingi* it says we must be quiet, we must be imperturbable in order to put Buddha's compassion into practice. There must be nothing disturbing us. We must cross the river without making the river dirty. This is the manner of tenderness. This is the manner of gentleness. This is the manner of thoughtfulness.

When you look at actual daily life you will realize there are many difficult things to deal with. The precept 'not to kill' is very difficult. In one sutra⁵ there is a good example. A ship is carrying many people. Suddenly a dragon appears and tries to swallow everyone. Buddha kills the dragon. Brahmins and priests asked Buddha what can we kill in order to sleep in peace? Buddha said, "Kill your anger. Kill the anger which is rooted in the bottom of your mind." This does not seem to be a definite response for us, but this is the most important thing to do first.

In Zen Center, someone says, "I don't like to kill cockroaches." In Tassajara, "I don't like to kill flies." But in the summer you know how numberless flies are! I can't say you should kill flies. I can't say you should leave flies alone. I can't say you shouldn't kill cockroaches.

This is a koan, you know. This is your practice.

If I told you you should kill flies, it would mean it is all right to kill cockroaches. To let a human being live more comfortably by making a sacrifice of a fly. If I told you don't kill cockroaches, it is also not true. It would mean to let flies or cockroaches live by making a sacrifice of human beings. You may ask me forever, "Is it all right to kill flies or cockroaches?" I will never give an answer. The question is answered forever, within yourself. What to do is within yourself.

During sesshin in Zen Center there was a student who practiced the Rinzai way in New York where the Zen Master had given him the koan *mu*. This student always said "muuuuuuu" but he didn't understand what *mu* was. He had dokusan with me at that time and asked: "If I sit *shikan taza*⁶ — will enlightenment come to me?" I said, "No, enlightenment won't come even though you sit in *shikan taza*." "If I sat in that way," he said, "Soen-roshi said I would grasp *mu*."

This is important. You have to grasp *mu*. You have to grasp the question and answer — what to do, how to deal with flies, cockroaches, yourself, others. Grasp all of them with your whole body and mind. This is zazen. The best way to grasp is to sit on the cushion. This is *shikan taza*. This is the vow.

⁵ Samyutta Nikāya Sutra.

⁶ *Shikan taza* is themeless meditation. It is "just sitting" or "sitting quietly doing nothing." *Shikan* means "to give up illusions and attain enlightenment;" *taza* means "to sit up to the hilt".—Katagiri-roshi.

3. GET RID OF BLIND MIND

Yesterday I mentioned that we need to give merciful attention to all sentient beings. Not only to human beings but also to grass, to tiny flowers, to insects. That is Buddha's compassion.

In English compassion is one word. But in Japanese compassion consists of two characters, *ji hi*, which mean the mind, the mental condition. *Ji* means awareness of the desire to give happiness to all sentient beings. *Hi* means awareness of the desire to eliminate the disadvantages and sufferings of people. Literally *hi* is sadness, pity. So *ji hi*, Buddha's compassion, is to be considerate to all sentient beings and also to make effort not to hurt others.

For instance, you may live downstairs in an apartment or house, and someone else lives upstairs. If there are children upstairs they may run wild when their parents go out. Then you will complain: "Your children ran wild when you were out yesterday." The parent says, "Oh, that's children's nature."

Day in and day out you complain. At last the parents say, "Let's change places. You live upstairs and we will live downstairs." Or, "How about your moving into another apartment?" This looks like a very good solution, but nothing is solved. You may move to another apartment, but such a family will also disturb whoever moves in next. Same thing.

As long as we live in the same building, we must make an effort to live together in peace. At that time you can learn what you are. And at that time you can save others.

Shakyamuni Buddha's compassion is to make man's mind tranquil by effacing his attachments, and bending his mind toward mercifulness. To get rid of attachment to the self is to hold off the spirit of antagonism and conflict with others. This brings us to express warmheartedness toward others.

The second verse is *Desires are numberless; I vow to put an end to them.*

The Buddhist psychological text *Abhidharma Kośa* lists 46⁸ functions which the mind possesses. Forty-six functions in six categories. Another Buddhist psychological text, *Jōyushikiron*, lists 51⁹ mental functions in six categories. The various mental functions are said to combine into 108 delusions. In Buddhism, for instance, love is a sort of delusion. Buddhism doesn't ignore the love created between men and women, but the conception of love is still an idea constructed with, and paired with, hatred. Many awful events are created by the relationship between men and women. Sometimes they kill each other because they love each other. Love can immediately change into the impulse of hatred. So love is a sort of mental function combined, mixed up by blind attachment.

⁷ "He among men, o Brahmin, who eschews
All claims of 'me' and 'mine': he in whom thought
Rises in lonely calm, in pity rapt." — *Dīgha-Nikāya* II, pg. 241.

⁸ "The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy" by J. Takakusu, pg. 72a.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Pg. 94a

The way to get rid of blind mind is to become yourself, to become a wise man who is aware of himself in daily life. That's all. In one of the sutras, the Sutta-Nipāta sutra, an old man says to Shakyamuni Buddha, "I am a pretty old man, growing weaker in energy, in sight, in hearing, in health. Day in and day out my body is fading away. Please instruct me how to live in peace, without wobbling, in this world."¹⁰ Buddha said, "You should get rid of your blind attachment to your existence, to your preconceptions: 'I am a pretty old man growing weaker in energy, health, sight.'"

This is pretty difficult because we exist in this world in the form of body and mind enveloped by various delusions. A student asked the Buddha¹¹: "I would like to be free from my life on the basis of Nirvāna. I will learn Nirvāna from your talk." Buddha said, "You should become a wise man who is watchful and truthful. Learn tranquillity of self from my talk." Buddha explains how to live in usual life, that is all. Nirvāna is not considered as something mysterious and strange; Nirvāna is only to keep away from blind attachment and to be alert, sincere in daily life.

Once a couple consulted with me at the time their baby son had died. The five-week-old infant had looked very sick to others but the father felt that a doctor was not necessary. I think the father had taught Oriental religion to Americans. He said, "Oh, it's not necessary. This baby knows himself better than the doctor. Nature will take care of this baby."

This is a very good principle but unfortunately the baby died. The couple cried and cried, but it was too late. Because this man was attached to his ideas, he impelled his baby to die.

That man knows himself better than others know him is, of course, true. I know myself better than you know me. But you have to know how many delusions you have. You can't completely control delusions. It is impossible to control even the emotional problems bubbling up from the bottom of your mind.

¹⁰ "I'm worn with age and weak and wan
My eyes are dim, my hearing's hard
Let me not die the while confused!
Blazon the word so I may know
How here to leave birth and decay!"

The Buddha said,
"Behold mankind by craving caught,
And by decay burnt up and bowed!
So be thou earnest, Pīngiya:
Be craving-quit to come no more."

—Sutta-Nipāta, 1120-1123.

¹¹ Brahman Dhotaka's questions:
"I long, great rishi, for your word;
And when I've heard your utterance,
Then will I train for cool of self."

The Buddha said,
"Be here indeed alert and apt!
When you have heard the utterance
From here, train for the cool of self."

—Sutta-Nipāta, 1061-1062.

It is all right to have certain ideas, but if your idea is not in accord with your daily life, it is just an idea — which is as good as death. This couple didn't take care of their baby's sickness. They just left him alone. By their blind attachment to their own strong ideas, they impelled their baby to die.

In dokusan, at that time, someone said, "I am very interested in food." So I said, "That's a good idea, how about your health?" And she said, "My health is not so good." "How about your baby?" "My baby is not so good, either." This is a problem. The idea of food didn't have any relation to her daily life, to herself, her baby, her husband. It was just her head that was enjoying a food trip, that's all. This is very dangerous.

When you are confronted with various difficulties, sometimes you think, "I wish I could die." But Buddha says, "Before you die, make every effort to get rid of your blind attachments which say, I wish I could die. Keep away from blind mind. Do not stay in actions done in the past. Do not worry again and again in the present. There is nothing to worry about in the future."¹²

It is really impossible to get rid of physical suffering. If you sit zazen you feel pain in your legs. Even Shakyamuni Buddha could not escape the physical torture he had when he was confronted with sickness. In the Milindapañha sutra¹³ Nāgasena, a venerable priest, said to a king in Greece: "Shakyamuni Buddha became almighty, like a god, throwing away all evil. But even he felt. . . physical suffering." For instance, in the castle of Oshajo in Magada, he hurt his leg on a rock. When there was a dysentery epidemic he became sick. When he was constipated his doctor¹⁴ gave him medicine. When he caught cold, the doctor brought hot water to him. Even the enlightened person who has accomplished his own practice experiences physical suffering. But mentally he can be free from suffering.

Through the practice of zazen you cannot help but realize some of your blind attachments. A Zen story tells us to take one step forward: when you climb to the top of the pole, take one step forward. We always stop and ask, what shall I do? Shall I go forward one step or shall I withdraw one step? Shall I take one step to the left or to the right? There is nobody to tell you. We stand on top of the pole asking should I kill flies or cockroaches or should I leave them alone? Nobody can say.

Dogen Zenji says do *shikan taza*, throwing away everything. . . .throwing away any kind of blind attachment. Do *shikan taza* constantly, forever.

¹² Sutta-Nipāta, 849.

¹³ 'Venerable Nāgasena, had the Blessed One, when he became a Buddha, burnt out all evil in himself, or was there still some evil remaining in him?'

'He had burnt out all evil. There was none left.'

'But how, Sir? Did not the Tathagata get hurt in his body?'

'Yes, O King. At Rāgagaha a splinter of rock pierced his foot, and once he suffered from dysentery, and once when the humours of his body were disturbed a purge was administered to him, and once when he was troubled with wind the Elder who waited on him (that is Ānanda) gave him hot water.'

— "The Questions of King Milinda", pg. 191.

¹⁴ Jivaka, son of Bimbisara. He is said to have mastered acupuncture.

4. LET LIFE GO IN THE DIRECTION OF UPRIGHTNESS

Shakyamuni Buddha says, look at the person who is egocentric in life, who wobbles. He is like a fish in a stream which is about to run dry.

What is the self to which we are blindly attached? To be freed from this attachment we have to taste the reality of the present, the stubbornness of ego — with our body and mind, not just through our intellectual sense. And then we have to control our numberless desires through leading a regular life, day in and day out. If progress in society and in human life is to be made, we must have rules and regulations.

A friend of mine had a very strong love for Japan at the age of 19 or 20 so he tried to become a policeman and protect Japan. He tried to take the entrance examination of the Metropolitan Police Office and fortunately was admitted to it. After registration, all students stood in the hall, in a row. The leader came and said, "Now we will practice the salute," and he gave a demonstration. All students started to salute. But he didn't say stop. All day this friend of mine practiced the salute — like this! From morning to night, like an electric doll. He thought, "This is more than I can bear."

At night, just before going to bed he went to the leader's room and said, "I have a stomach ache, please send me home." So the leader sent him home, and this friend never went back to the Metropolitan Police Office.

Try to practice the salute every day, all day. What do you think? In the Metropolitan Police Office, the purpose of the practice is to develop the Metropolitan Police Office. They have to break in a man. But in a Zen monastery the purpose is to educate each individual first. If progress is to be made in this world, first men must make progress not the organization. If the important thing is to develop the organization, men have to be broken in. It is a rule of organizational life. Even though in the Zen monastery there are many strict rules, these regulations are to disabuse people of illusion. They are there to enable man to open his eyes.

From these regulations you will also learn the meaning of the third verse, *The Dharmas are boundless, I vow to master them.*

Because our lives exist entirely within stubbornness of ego, when we are confronted with difficulties we are at a loss. At that time we need to find some way to turn a new leaf in our life. After that, after the turning point of our life, our effort will focus on people, in the direction of people.

To turn our life into something new we must become fully aware of ourselves. To come to know ourselves as we are, as a man is, we must come to know the dharma — the noumenon — as contrasted with phenomena. The dharma is the law of being, the underlying condition (reality) of the universe. Shakyamuni Buddha says you should search through and through for what the dharma is. Inwardly and outwardly.

The meaning of the third verse is that men should taste the dharma with their bodies and minds. In the *Shōbōgenzō* by Dogen Zenji the meaning of *shōbō* is right dharma or truth. *Genzō* means the Buddha's teaching. In a commentary written by one of Dogen's disciples *shōbō* was explained this way: *shō* is the right; to go in the direction of rightness, straightforwardness, honesty in life. To

be in the all — not to have prejudice — because a prejudiced opinion is the expression of the simple-minded. That is the dharma.

There is no 'right way' of standing upright. To stand right is to let life go constantly in the direction of uprightness, honesty. Moment after moment.

To sit on your round cushion is not merely to lounge on your round cushion without paying considerate attention to your posture, your head, your mouth, your hands. If we just sit with round back, head hanging, it seems comfortable, a calm posture. It seems peaceful because there is no feeling of tension. This is not the right attitude in life; this will not let you get a taste of the noumenon because there is no *full revelation of self* in that posture, in that attitude.

If you want to be aware of yourself — what you are, who you are — you have to sit on the cushion in uprightness, in straightforwardness, in honesty. That attitude in life is called calmness, peace, tranquillity. It is not a static attitude, lacking in dynamic movement. This attitude includes both static and dynamic movement.

Dogen Zenji says there is a standard of practice which is called *jijuyu zammai*. *Ji* means of itself. *Ju* means to receive, to accept. *Yu* means to function. *Zammai* is samadhi. Professor Masanaga translated this as the self-joyous samadhi. I translate it living vivid samadhi, accepting your life in the reality of the present. This vivid living samadhi looks like a spinning top standing upright on the floor on one very thin foot. Within its movement there are both static and dynamic aspects.

Jijuyu zammai, Dogen Zenji says, is based on *shikan taza* or *zazen*. Even though I explain many times how to sit in meditation, straighten your back or your head or your mouth ("Where are your hands? Where is your tongue?"), unless you get the taste of your own *zazen*, straightening your own back and head, taking care of your mouth, tongue, hands, how can I guide your life? Within this *zazen* is your own vivid living samadhi in life. At that time you can learn what the dharma is.

In the Zen monastery there are many rules. When you eat pickles don't make noise. How can you eat pickles without making noise you ask? It's impossible, a crazy rule. According to your head, it is a crazy rule. But when you eat a pickle, you have to eat it in vivid samadhi. At that time you can taste the close relationship between you and the pickle. At that time to not make a noise eating the pickle is to be compassionate to the pickle. To the pickle, to your bowl, to the chopsticks, to the plums, to everything you encounter, moment after moment. At that time you can learn what is the dharma which is transmitted from Buddha to you. At that time you can feel tranquillity in life.

That is the meaning of the third verse: become vivid living samadhi in the reality of the present moment. That is to master the dharmas.

5. YOU ARE COMPLETELY ENVELOPED BY BUDDHA'S WORLD

The more you earnestly practice Buddha's compassion the more you realize how strong are the numberless delusions which cover your daily life. In Zen Center, in Tassajara, you try to live according to some schedule, some moral regulations. What should we learn through this practice of following a regular life day in and day out?

By living your regular daily life according to some moral rules and regulations you will become aware of wisdom. When you realize wisdom, your life will be completely free from numberless desires and illusions.

The fourth verse, *The Buddha's way is unsurpassable; I vow to attain it*, describes the ultimate attitude of human life based on freedom, emancipation.

When I was at Komazawa University, a Zen Master lectured about a Shin priest who came to him. This Zen Master asked the priest, "You practice chanting the name of Amitabha Buddha day in and day out. People all over Japan are about to die from an epidemic. What will Amitabha do?" The priest said, "I don't know." The Zen Master told us, "Amitabha does not run all over Japan to save sentient beings. Amitabha is completely free. Even though people ask, please come, please help, Amitabha doesn't move. Nevertheless Amitabha is reflected in the water of the ocean, in the water of the lake, in a drop of dew. Even in a drop of pee," he said.

From this story you can imagine how huge the outline of Buddha is.

There is a famous Chinese story entitled "Journey to Western Paradise" about a Chinese priest who went to India to study Buddhism. In Japanese his name was Genjo Sanzo. A monkey followed this priest to help his journey. This monkey from birth had tried to become wise, wiser even than human beings, because he believed that human beings were the wisest in the world. One day he went to one of the saints to practice asceticism, to do magic practice — like flying, letting his body disappear, things like that. Day in and day out he practiced. And one day he got a certificate from the saint: "You have become a great being, wiser than a human being."

He came back to his village to test his experience. He disappeared, he flew. One day Amitabha Buddha gave him some advice, because he was always being mischievous, stealing something or breaking into a house, speaking ill of a priest, running wild at the temples, hurting the village people. Amitabha said: "Little monkey, don't do that." The monkey said, "What did you say? Do you know how great I am? Do you know what kind of practice I do?" Amitabha said, "I don't know exactly. Tell me." And the monkey said, with a smile of self-satisfaction, "I have practiced asceticism in order to have magic powers: to fly in the air, to let my body disappear, to get anything I want." So Amitabha Buddha said, "Umm, would you show me?" The monkey said, "Ok, I'll show arriving at the end of space."

"That's interesting. Please try that." Then the monkey said: "One, two. . . ." Choooom. . . and immediately he disappeared. He rushed into the air, into space. He continued to run into space. . . until suddenly there was something before him, four huge poles. He put the brakes on. . . and stopped. "What is this huge pole? I can't go. . . any further. Where am I?" Looking around, he felt, "I think I

am at the end of space." Then he took out his brush and put an "x" at the bottom of the poles. Then he said, "Now I'll go back to my village."

The moment he was about to leave, a voiceless voice came: "Little monkey, are you sure you have arrived at the end of space?" "Yes, certainly. That's why I left proof that I was here. Can you see that mark at the bottom of the poles?" Amitabha looked. "Yes, I can see them." "Well then, my business is over," said the monkey, "I want to go back to my village."

The moment he tried to leave all four poles fell down and the monkey was buried under them. He couldn't move. "Help, help." Amitabha said, "What's the matter?" The monkey lifted his head and found Amitabha's face. "Wow, you are Amitabha aren't you?" "Yes, I am. Little monkey, you believe you have arrived at the end of space, but you should make sure where you are." The monkey looked around. . . like this. . . and said, "Wow, this is Amitabha's hand."

"Little monkey, you are right. . . you are right in my hand. Not at the end of space. Don't be infatuated with your experience, with your practice. What you have done is the limitation of your experience. Do you understand?" The monkey said, "Yes, I'm sorry Amitabha." From then on the monkey was very gentle and followed the priest, to help his journey, from China to India.

Wherever you go, you are completely enveloped by Buddha's world. Don't worry about where you are. Don't be elated with your capability, with your practice, however long you have practiced zazen.

At Sokoji Temple one day I showed a movie about Buddhism in Burma, "A Priest's Life in Burma." In this film all the priests walk on the street very quietly, straightening their bodies, not smiling, with soft, very gentle faces. They walk with dignified spirit, one by one, carrying their umbrellas. The disciple of one old priest, a very small boy, followed his master. Sometimes he ran to catch up with the old man. Sometimes he stopped for a while to play with an insect or a butterfly. But this old man never looked back. He just carried his umbrella down the street, constantly walking at the same pace. I was very impressed.

You have the same beauty of human nature within your mind as the Burmese priest. But you have to seek this beauty. Even Dogen sought this beauty until his death. Through the practice of zazen. But the beauty he sought is different from that of the Burmese priests. What he sought has a close relationship to daily life.

In Buddhism the absolute beauty of human nature is called Buddha. Dogen explained that Buddha is called *Bukkojo* in Japanese. *Butsu* is Buddha. *Kojo* is to advance. *Bukkojo* means we have to advance toward Buddha forever, and also that Buddha is omnipresent, right under our step. *Bukkojo* doesn't mean there is a substance called Buddha which we are to aim at. Buddha is not some stage to reach. Buddha is the huge expanse of the world showing right under your step. Buddha's world exists every time you walk. To taste this world, this truth, with body and mind means when you bow, just bow. When you chant, just chant, with your whole body and mind. When you do *gassho*, do *gassho* with whole body and mind. Leave nothing behind your *gassho*, your bow, your chanting of the sutra, your walking down the street. Just walk, with calmness, with dignified spirit.

But it is not so easy to do. When you do *gassho*, or zazen, there is something you expect in your mind. It means you have left something behind you which is called dregs at the bottom of the barrel.

Let's imagine that you put a little water into the barrel, which means you have a little knowledge about Buddhism, about zazen. You are very happy. In order to make people pay attention to your knowledge you go back home to teach what zazen is, instead of continuing to practice. "Hey, look at my knowledge, look at my zazen." It looks like you are always shaking the barrel in order to make noise.

If you have a little water in the bottom of the barrel, if you shake it, it makes much noise.¹⁵ Even if you completely fill the barrel with water, you also leave something behind. Something like enlightenment? "I attained enlightenment."

Whatever it is you experience, something remains in the bottom of the barrel. Sometimes these dregs are called Enlightenment, sometimes delusions, sometimes hallucinations.

There are some interesting stories in the book *Senjūshō*¹⁶ by Saigyō Hosshi, a famous Buddhist priest and poet. One story is about an old woman follower of the Shin school, who chanted the Amitabhas. She invited a famous Shin priest to calm her mind because she was at the moment of her death. The priest came to her and she asked him, "Would you instruct me about Buddha's teaching to help me live peacefully in Buddha's world?" The priest said, "Let's chant the name of Amitabha." Then this old woman closed her eyes and started to chant Amitabha's name. . . "namandabutsu, namandabutsu. . ." again and again. . . "namandabutsu, namandabutsu. . ." After a while she said, "There is now a beautiful figure of Amitabha Buddha trying to come down to my home from heaven. With 25 Bodhisattvas. What should I do?"

He said, "Let's continue to chant the name of Amitabha." The woman started to chant the name of Amitabha again. Ten minutes later she asked, "This time a very miserable priest, with shaved head, with 500 Arhats, is coming to my home. What shall I do?" "Please, let's chant the name of Amitabha," he replied. She started to chant the name of Amitabha again. Through this practice, she gradually left this world, quietly, in peace.

As this story shows there are numberless dregs left in the bottom of the barrel, called Amitabha, 25 Bodhisattvas, 500 ugly miserable priests wearing worn-out robes with shaved heads. Whatever kind of dream was in her head, there was nothing to do but leave the various dregs there. When you look at yourself during zazen you look at many delusions. Sometimes beautiful dreams of Kannon Bodhisattva appear. Sometimes your dreams are like beautiful western paintings, in watercolor or oil. Sometimes very simple pictures painted in sumi ink. Sometimes you dream in printed letters, sometimes, semi-cursive letters, "Don't worry, it's not necessary to have too much tension in zazen. Please, relax a little." Sometimes you dream in completely cursive letters, "I don't like tense straight zazen."

¹⁵ "Learn this from rivers' flow
In mountain cleft and chasm:
Loud gush the rivulets,
The great stream silent moves." — Sutta-Nipāta, 720.

¹⁶ A work of Saigyō (1117-1190) in nine fascicles. A collection of 103 notes about religious experiences which reflect the spirit of Buddhism.

When you sit zazen, even for a moment, you cannot escape the delusion which immediately starts to work. According to Dogen's *Fukanzazengi*: "You should sit zazen without wasting time." The moment you hear that you straighten up, like this. Then the next moment your brain starts to work. "What is straight?" And gradually your chin sticks out and you start to dream.

To stand up is to stand upright in the middle of Buddha's world, not upright in the middle of your brain trip. Just stand up, ok? Of course even though you try to stand upright something happens from the outside. . . something interesting which makes you pay attention to it. Some good smell right before dinner, "Hmmm. . . very good smell. What's that dish?" But the important point, the difference between Buddha and the unawakened is how long you sway in your thoughts. "Wow, what kind of dish is that? Who is the cook today? Maybe Frances? She is a very good cook. How many cooks are making tonight's meal? Today there are many sick students. Poor sick students, they will miss this dish." This is the attitude of the unawakened.

The attitude of Buddha is, "Good smell, ok. Who is cook? Frances, ok." Nothing else.

Dogen Zenji says *bukkojo*. . . advance. If you find something wrong with the direction, you should return to your own place. This is to stand upright in the middle of Buddha. At that time you can get a taste of peacefulness which is the perfection of full function, right in the middle of Buddha's world. Through this tranquillity your body and mind are completely free from obstacles. Then you can be considerate, compassionate to all sentient beings. Also you can understand what you are.

So what the four vows tell us is to continue to advance toward Buddha. This is the Bodhisattva life. Therein is the perfection of stillness. To advance is always to walk toward Buddha, not to walk at random. This is practice. This is Buddha's way.



Lay Ordination , August 1971



ZAZEN AND LECTURE SCHEDULE

ZEN CENTER & AFFILIATES	ZAZEN AND SERVICE		LECTURES
	Monday through Friday	Saturday	
SAN FRANCISCO	5:00-7:10 a.m. 5:30-6:30 p.m. (except Tues.) 8:30-9:15 p.m. (except Tues.)	5:00-10:00 a.m. (incl. breakfast & work period)	7:30 p.m. Tues., 10:00 a.m. Sat.
BERKELEY	5:00-6:45 a.m. 5:40-6:20 p.m. 8:30-9:15 p.m. (except Tues.)		Monday morning after zazen
LOS ALTOS	5:30-6:30 a.m. 8:00-9:00 p.m.	5:30-9:15 a.m. (incl. breakfast & work period)	8:30 p.m. Weds. Thursday morning after zazen
MILL VALLEY	5:45-6:45 a.m.		6:45 a.m. Weds.
CARMEL	6:00-7:00 a.m. M, W, F only		7:30 p.m. Thurs.

*In San Francisco, zazen instruction is given for new students Saturdays at 8:30 a.m.

*A five-day sesshin is held starting the first Saturday of April, June, October and December

*A seven-day sesshin is held starting the first Saturday of February and August

*In Berkeley, Los Altos and Mill Valley lectures are given after zazen, as indicated.

*In Berkeley there is no zazen on days that end with a 4 or 9 except Mondays when there is always zazen followed by lecture. Zendo is open Monday through Friday only.

*In Los Altos a discussion group meets alternate Tuesday evenings at 7:30.

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