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The Song of Zazen

by Hakuin Ekaku Zenji

All sentient beings are essentially Buddhas. As with water and ice, there is no ice without water; apart from sentient beings, there are no Buddhas. Not knowing how close the truth is we seek it far away—what a pity!

We are like one who in the midst of water cries out desperately in thirst. We are like the son of a rich man who wandered away among the poor. The reason we transmigrate through the Six Realms is because we are lost in the darkness of ignorance. Going further and further astray in the darkness, how can we ever be free from birth-and-death? As for the Mahayana practice of zazen, there are no words to praise it fully.

The Six Paramitas, such as giving, maintaining the precepts, and various other good deeds like invoking the Buddha's name, repentance, and spiritual training, all finally return to the practice of zazen. Even those who have sat zazen only once will see all karma erased. Nowhere will they find evil paths, and the Pure Land will not be far away. If we listen even once with open heart to this truth, then praise it and gladly embrace it, how much more so then if on reflecting within ourselves we directly realize Self-nature, giving proof to the truth that Self-nature is no nature. We will have gone far beyond idle speculation. The gate of the oneness of cause and effect is thereby opened, and not-two, not-three, straight ahead runs the Way.

Realizing the form of no-form as form, whether going 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. How vast and wide the unobstructed sky of samadhi! How bright and clear the perfect moonlight of the Fourfold Wisdom! At this moment what more need we seek? As the eternal tranquility of Truth reveals itself to us, this very place is the Land of Lotus and this very body is the body of the Buddha.

We now finally have arrived at the final part of Hakuin

Zenji's Song of Zazen.

Each year before Rohatsu this text has been used for guiding people of training, to be of even some help, this has been my hope, and for this the Hakuin Zenji Song of Zazen newsletter has been always sent before Rohatsu.

We started with "All sentient beings are essentially Buddhas", and that is the basic fuel for liberating all beings. All beings have Buddha nature and having this, all beings are equal. There is not anyone who is without Buddha nature but because they are not awakened to it they are deluded and confused. So how do we release that delusion and return to our original awareness? How do we do this? For this answer we have the Song of Zazen of Hakuin Zenji.

Master Hakuin teaches, "Even those who have sat zazen only once will see all karma erased. Nowhere will they find evil paths, and the Pure Land will not be far away. If we listen even once with open heart to this truth, then praise it and gladly embrace it, how much more so then if on reflecting within ourselves we directly realize Self-nature, giving proof to the truth that Self-nature is no nature. We will have gone far beyond idle speculation." Humans most original and root mind is clear and the same for everyone. We all, each and every one of us, have an ego awareness, but that is not everything. There is a truth prior to the ego which we each have to discover. To do this we do zazen.

At the source, prior to ego, there is no ego and to awaken to this we have the guide of zazen. The true source of the Buddha Nature is all right here, to realize that truth prior to ego is what is taught in Hakuin's song.

In our last Rohatsu newsletter, we talked about,

"How bright and clear the perfect moonlight of the Fourfold Wisdom! At this moment what more need we seek?"

In the old days in China there lived a master named Kiso Zenji. One day he came into the kitchen where the monks were working, if he looked he could see easily

what they were doing but anyway he asked them,"
What are you doing?"

One monk answered, "We are using the stone mill and making flour".

In the old days they would make flour by grinding two large grooved stones together. As those rubbed against each other soybeans, wheat or other grains would be ground to a powder. Of course this was not only used in China in the Tang dynasty but in all of history in many places, sometimes with the help of a horse or cow.

There has to be a large thick post through the middle of the two stones so that they go around and around in the same place and not slide off. Groove to groove, ridge to ridge they contact each other and their friction grinds the grain to a fine powder.

Master Kiso said to them, "Even if you grind the flour don't grind away that center log."

Then suddenly he left. These are truly very flavorful words.

In our world everything is always moving and we end up having to move to do things. If there is not one center post that does not move, then everything becomes blind motion and we are moved around by things and not centered.

"Isn't there something good over here? or over there? This is mistaken! This is true! This is good, This is bad!" cries our ego.

We are always being thrown around by these kinds of ideas when we are without any true central belief. This unawakened movement is but blind movement and is truly pitiful. Lacking a true center, it seems that we are working for society but in fact we are being used by society. No matter what a good things we do if there is no central belief and faith we are just being moved around by circumstances and people's convenience and that makes it meaningless, or only meaningful for society but otherwise without worth. We cannot know then what our life is meant for, instead our life becomes like the life of dogs, cats and pigs eating feed without the possibility of awakening.

People often say, "How can you sit and do zazen in this busy active world? Where is there any meaning in doing that? At least by sitting and reading a book you become more clever, or by working you make money, but if you don't do anything and just sit you will fall behind the movement of the world and be left behind!"

All of that may seem to make sense but if all one is doing is blind movement that is truly pathetic and more than a majority of acts are only this blind movement.

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We think that we are doing the moving but in fact it is not based in a value we hold deeply, rather the world around us has given a value to things and brought it forth into action and movement. If we see the meaning from inside we can find meaning in the action but if it is from the outside, then it is something being put on top of us. We may do fine if the world does not change but if we give up our own values whether for politics, for economics, or for war -for any of these things and then, suddenly our factory or company closes, or our home forecloses and we are confused completely.

This is the same issue can arise in a household, each individual has their own ego and they can work together as long as they share a value, but if those values change it is very painful. Because people's values so often are changing many homes are full of suffering. In any era, for each of us we have to discover that which is one value for all or we will continue with ongoing friction and confusion.

To live in this world, to know that which does not get moved around by anything, we ask if such a possibility really does exist or not? To realize this possibility within our lives, is actually the truth of religion. Today religions argue so much between themselves it is hard to know which is true and real, instead all we see is conflicting and confused. A deep faith that is immovable is very rare to find and see these days.

In the first half of the twentieth century there was a philosopher named Nishida Kitaro. He practised zazen and from within his zazen experience he wrote about and clarified the deep essence of mu. In his zazen diary he wrote the poem

"In my mind there is a depth so profound that it is beyond all waves of joy and sorrow."

On the surface of our mind are emotions which are like the surface of water when the wind is blowing. Whether there is happiness or sadness on the surface, at the very bottom there is a mind that is not moved around by anything. He had realized this profound mind. Our state of mind is always changing as our emotions' change. But when we realize that deep unmovable place we are no longer pushed around even when joy and sadness arise, we are not confused by these changes and emotions.

"The moon in the sky, no matter what strong, chilly wind blows, it is never is blown down by it."

This is not only about the moon in the sky it is for our mind as well, if we win or lose, if we are praised or insulted, whether we live or die, there is a state of mind that does not get moved around by anything.

As the Buddha said in the Dhammapada:

"The one who wins receives the resentment; the one who loses is so upset they cannot sleep at night. Those who let go of any winning or losing, whether they win or lose they are at peace in their mind."

In this way he taught, that the value of winning and losing is only relative. We have to go beyond that division and forget that division between life and death. Only there can eternal life be realized. For those who do know life with no death, one day is more valuable than one hundred years of life in a deluded mind state. The Buddha taught this in the Dhammapada. To penetrate this is to know that which is beyond life and death.

The founder of Myoshinji, Muso Daishi who lived so humbly and practiced his whole life, was very strict about training and he would refuse anyone who came to ask to practice with him. One day a monk came and made the request to train there to clarify the question of life and death and the founder said there is no birth and death here at this place!! In this way in our deepest mind we go beyond good and bad, and life and death and realize the truth prior to any of those. This is the zazen. When Master Kiso said don't grind away the center post, it was because to realize that center post is the point of our zazen. We must clarify that center post.

Today we are at the height of technological discovery and have received so much convenience from our computers, we have cars that move us, and are surrounded by electrical appliances. All around us there are so many things but these things are also always changing. We see so many models of new cars being produced, or else the company loses money. Each computer company puts out many models, in two months there is always a new version and if we don't get the newest one we cannot keep up with what goes with the computer. If we look around at all the electrical appliances we see that these things are always changing and each year they become capable of doing more things. We have these convenient things all around us but we are panting to keep up with learning how to make use of them, we've invented them but they get so advanced we end up being used by them. We become but one of the machines' parts and we are used up as a part.

This has become such a common place matter for all of us, and so while we outwardly just think of these machines as convenient if we look closely then we see that we are being moved around by all the value we place on the machines and conveniences and we see that we feel we are unable to be without machines. These machines can be used but it also means that we are being used by that machine. Because of this our mind is always moving and we become more and more melancholy and empty, and we try to fill that emptiness with more material things.

Humans who have this all embracing power have instead let go of their power and this makes their individual weight heavy. Contrarily, this makes light of human beings and if we have the ability to see this we will see that we have to make efforts to strengthen our essence. Very few people of the modern world have realized their full inner tautness.

To think of ourselves as only a part of a machine is to lose our human quality and character, it is Zen that returns our awareness of ourself as more than that and I think that, in the world today, only Zen is teaching this.

Rinzai Zenji said that if we realize the true master we are master in every situation. To be that true master is to awaken to that deep mind, then no matter what activity we do, it is the truth. But if we are moved around by the objective world then this is not truly being alive. Rinzai would always see this as subject and object. For people today the object is huge and the subject is very small. Rinzai is saying we have to awaken to that true strong master and only in realizing that can we live a true life.

Put roughly, subject and object means to have a mind and a body and when one they are subject and everything else is object. But if we look a little closer, our mind is also at times an object. We can examine our own body, "should not be so thin, should not be so sad looking", we can look at our body objectively and we can look at our behaviour, "oh I did not do that today, I said that which I did not need to say". Our words and actions can be objective, as well as our own character, irritated and impatient and in a hurry we can see that we don't want to be so dark. We can see our own character and with the subjective we can look within and see deeply and profoundly into our own mind.

We can see within and this is the mysterious flavor of the essence of zazen and finally we realize the place of only seeing, not able to be seen. This has to be there or it is not the true zazen. It is not about saying, "Don't see, don't hear, don't speak, but rather to ask, " what am I ?" "what is seeing?" "what is hearing?"

We have to dig within into this question or as we sit it will not bring forth a realization of true inner essence. We do zazen within a world full of people living in relativity. That which we see as ego awareness is always relative to other people, but here what we speak of is that which does not recognize or acknowledge anything. To realize this true subjective, to realize that absolute subjective, discovering it directly, that is the true master within the master. I think that to see this is to see Zen.

Our awareness can perceive from the smallest thing to the largest, and this is where all the sciences work. But awareness never can see awareness. There is this true

awareness which we cannot perceive and this does not come from experience or the piling up of something, it is prior to all of that. The ancients, for want of another word, would say Buddha nature, or great enlightenment or sometimes called it mu.

Recently people are always talking about respecting each others individual character and rights, but no matter how you look at it, these are not the things to respect. My actions and personality are not the things that deserve respect. So what about me should one respect? Only that pure awareness is whole and deeply dignified and valuable I feel. Within each of us we have to realize that which is prior to ego and sees ego with its attention. We have to open the eyes that can see this.

In this way of seeing into our mind, if we can open these eyes, then all we see that in this way people are all one and the same. If we were to say we are different then that means that we have not yet realized the true base prior to any dividing into self and other. Bankei Zenji said it in this way, "You who have gathered here today all came to hear my talk and so, of course, that talk comes into your ears. But if the dog outside barks 'bow wow!' now everyone hears it and no one consults another, but they all hear it now - this is Buddha nature."

In the Diamond Sutra it says, "Abiding in no place, awakened mind arises."

Without adding anything, no past experience, no preconceived notions, this pure activity comes jumping forth. If we realize this true mind, this is how it occurs. It is not about saying "Don't see! and Don't hear! and Don't speak!", but that which is very precisely without any preferences sees and reflects everything. This is the truth of our deepest mind, human's original mind and true base. All humans without any exception and without any small mind included are endowed with this mind and its way of being.

In Indian philosophy they call this mind the basic all-inclusive-mind-stratum, it is that which includes everything, all experiences, it is a storehouse. Our mind has all of our experience and perceptions, it is all stored there from prior to our birth, from all of our ancestors and all of our past lives, all of it is stored there. With that our personality is decided and each and everyone is different and so are humans experiences all different. Everyone thinks their experience is truth and their opinion is right, but this is where we conflict about who is most correct.

Shotoku Daishi said

Let us control ourselves and not be resentful when others disagree with us, for all men have hearts and each heart has its own leanings. The right of others is

our wrong, and our right is their wrong. We are not unquestionably sages, nor are they unquestionably fools. Both of us are simply ordinary men. How can anyone lay down a rule by which to distinguish right from wrong? For we are all wise sometimes and foolish at others. Therefore, though others give way to anger, let us on the contrary dread our own faults, and though we may think we alone are in the right, let us follow the majority and act like them.

If we really see what our true original mind is we see that to hold no opinion is most true. It is not just to have no opinion but to return to that basis of mind that cannot be moved around and has no opinion. For all of us, all people have this mind within.

Bankei Zenji continues saying that from the origin there is nothing at all and if we look, we cannot find anything called a mind. It is like things that appear in a mirror, not there from the beginning so they cannot die. We reflect all kinds of things but the mirror does not get smelly or hot nor down nor does it give us any fever. Even if things that are heavy appear in the mirror, it does not get heavy inside. It does not increase nor decrease.

The Heart Sutra says it just like this. This is about humans' true mind, and this is what Bankei Zenji also says. It is also called "The great round mirror like mind". From the origin there is no form nor shape, no clean nor impure, no increase nor decrease. Beyond pure, it is eternal and another way of saying that is the word 'mu'.

This is not nihilistic although it has no shape nor form. It is alive and it reflects a highly responsive life energy, holding nothing yet moving immediately and without hesitation. Takuan Zenji writes of this from kendo master's point of view, writing about Zen in his book, *The Unfettered Mind*. Unfettered Mind is without stopping in any mind moment, and is empty minded, this does not mean, as many think it does, that we should become unfeeling. For example, in a serious match we must not allow our mind to stop anywhere, this is an unfettered mind. If there's a gap, we are just that late. We have to not allow our attention to be stopped at the opponent's or eyes or hand. Without any thought of winning or losing, of strong or weak, to have our mind placed nowhere. And yet it is not about being unfeeling or not perceiving but to be stopped nowhere. With our perceptions and feelings, we have to liberate our mind completely. This is the unfettered mind. When one comes to us, we can respond immediately. "The true dharma has no form yet it is in all the ten directions". Master Rinza has said it like this. This ongoing alive life energy is called Zen.

In the Heart Sutra it says "no eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind" This is about our aware-

ness because there is nothing in our eyes and ears. We can see and hear freely, and the same is true with our nose. We can smell with it because our functioning is free and liberated. Our tongue and taste can experience everything because we are free from any idea of likes and dislikes. In this way our ability is not holding onto anything, we hold no preferences or stuck places. We have to always be free from those opinions or we cannot receive the truth of mu. Only being empty of attachments this is most important.

When we perceive the world, if we have history and opinions we cannot see things purely, it is impossible. In Zen we throw that all away and truly realize the pure and 'freed-up' person and see the world from that clarified awareness.

This is why Dogen Zenji said :

To study the way is to study the self
To study the self is to forget the self
To forget the self is to be enlightened by all things
To be enlightened by all things
is to remove the barrier between self and other.

A pure awareness and the objective world, when they are matched perfectly then for the first time an actuality arises where we lose track of a sense of a self. Only then can pure perception occur, where we match perfectly with what we are perceiving. Letting go of any division between self and other we are the flower, we are the bird and we become all the ten thousand things. The object and subject are perfectly one with the awareness and free of any self-conscious awareness. They are one and the same and that is manifested by all the the thousand things, the flowers, the birds and from there comes true compassion and love. It is this love that is most missing in the world today. The ego is not bad but if we are limited to its narrow perception, if we are caught on our ego that is the source of all confusion and we are without any true flexibility.

We have to realize that state of mind where our true mind is the all embracing mind, that place where there is no relativity, where all beings can be liberated and with that receive the whole world just as it is. Liberating our mind is essential, only there is our true original face able to be seen directly. Today this is what is most important. We honor the individual qualities but these are not the ultimate. Prior to that is this mind of all beings which we all have equally and from there comes the love that matches the individual qualities perfectly. Today everything is divided and relative, when there is actually only one mind in all beings and we are all one from one source mind.

We all have to realize this or we will stay in the whirlpool of ego confusion. It is not that we have to get

rid of ego but to waken to what is prior to that ego and directly touch and see that without the ego filter. When we can realize this true source then the true activity and function can be seen and that is the deepest value and worth of Zen.

In this way the pure and actual experience has to be had. As Hakuin Zenji writes,

"Even those who have sat zazen only once will see all karma erased. Nowhere will they find evil paths, and the Pure Land will not be far away."

We have not lost that potential to experience that truth prior to ego, but just lost track of it behind the ego. To realize that origin we have to do zazen, Hakuin Zenji is teaching us in the Rohatsu Exhortations with the following story and example:

Have you heard of Heshiro? He donated the money for the large statue of the Immovable Fudo to be placed by the water fall. On the opening day when the statue was put into place, everyone was gathered by the waterfall for celebrating. Heshiro was eating the feast and not really focusing he happened to see the water pouring down the waterfall and noticed the infinite bubbles. He was just kind of watching them and it caught his attention that some of the bubbles broke after one meter, while some broke after three meters but that they all broke. Some even went for ten or twenty meters, floating along downstream, then they would also pop. As he watched this it occurred to him that all them eventually popped and he saw that this is the very same situation for humans. That some die at the beginning of a life, some are at working age when they die, or depending on their own individual life span, but all of them eventually die. He had always thought it was about someone else but in one sudden brief moment he realized that he would also die. He had never thought about it like this before, his karma had ripened perhaps and he was suddenly troubled about what he was alive for and how he had done nothing and now he was going to die. "This is too pathetic!"

He had put his life on the line for his work and always done whatever any one asked. While he was a good person, still he did not know at all the worth of his own life energy, his own inner self, and he had only been moved around by external things. What am I? What is it that is only me? What is it that I have to awaken to? Now no longer could he tell what life was about.

His rice wine started to taste terrible and so did the food. Everyone meeting there became pointless since everyone would eventually die. He was so sad and had to leave, making excuses that he had to do something, he left. His mind was in deep despair with no where to turn.

As he went home he heard from inside a nun's hermitage a sutra being read that said, "For sentient beings with a daring spirit, awakening may happen without delay, while for sentient beings with a lazy spirit, attaining nirvana may take three asamkaya kalpas"

As he heard these words chanted, he made a great resolve that he had to complete this one firm vow or he would be floated around forever. He went from there straight to his guest bathhouse that was never used, and locked it from inside so no one could open it. He did zazen which he had never learned how to do but he just knew he had to realize that one mind moment. He straightened his back and opened his eyes and did zazen.

After a short while all kind so thoughts came to him and all kinds of voices and doubts about what he was doing and he knew that was the most important place and he must not be moved around by those things or he would be thrown off. This is what those words had meant "With straight forward bravery in one straight line." His head was as if a bee's nest had been provoked, one thought after another he cut and cut and let go of all of the thoughts that came until at one point, he did not know where he was, he lost track of everything. He had no idea of how much time had passed but later he heard a bird's song from far away but he had no body and no existence of a self, both of his eyes were stuck, fastened on the ground, and he was in a very mysterious condition.

After a while he felt that pain in his hands. And then his eyes returned to his face and his body's existing could be felt again and after a while he could move and just felt how very mysterious that was, he had never had such an experience before but it was very pleasant ,he felt good and there was no more insecurity. It had been flown away and he thought of nothing, was caught on nothing. He felt bright and clear and so he decided to do it again. That night he once again realized zazen. Again, one thought after the next came but again he let go of all of them until he lost track of his awareness and body completely. And again at dawn he had the same experience. For three days and three nights he continued until on the third morning when he washed his face and looked out the window, "What a shining green garden is there!". It was as if he was seeing it for the first time. All was radiant and illuminated. He could see it in that way - "What very mysterious scenery! I have never seen this before!"

He hastened to the local temple but the priest there did not have a clue and told him to go see Hakuin in Iihara and so he decided to go see Master Hakuin and he called for a palanquin and got in it . On the way at Satta Peak when they passed it, although he had been by there many many times for work, he had never seen

such beautiful scenery as this in his whole life! He had heard it before but here it was, just as he had read about it, all the trees and grasses were shining, all of them! He said "so this is what they were talking about!"

Must have Master Hakuin check this out! So he had the carriage hurry to Hakuin's where he did sanzen and when Hakuin checked him he could easily answer each and every koan which Hakuin asked him with no dualism or explanation, just straight and direct perception of the truth. Hakuin said "This is the real thing! He has really awakened to true mind." Hakuin told this story to his gathered disciples.

"Look at that! Heshiro was an amateur, not a monk and in three days and nights of samadhi he broke through. It is not ideas and knowledge, it is pure experience. Ideas just get in the way. To go without stopping in one straight line, to return to your true mind is all there is that has got to be done." Hakuin tells this to his students to encourage them.

Maste Kyogen heard the sound of the bamboo hitting a tile and was awakened. He heard that sound and simultaneously everything he'd held on to fell away and he realized his original mind, not by studying, but by touching that mind of a baby before it knows anything about any north, west, east or south.

We make efforts to get free from all of our opinions and ideas but once we have touched it deeply, there is the advanced free mind from before we were born. This is the satori of Zen and there are no habits of our parents or ideas from the world or our reading. These all disappear and this free self that extends to all beings is within each of us, but we cover it over with ideas and reasons and we put it to sleep and leave it asleep. All of the ancients starting with the Buddha returned to this mind, touched it directly and saw that only here is humans' truth.

"I have the True Dharma Eye, the Marvelous Mind of Nirvana, the True form of The Formless, and the Subtle Dharma Gate, independent of words and transmitted beyond doctrine, This I have entrusted to Makakashyapa."

This is the true mind in each of us which is not an explanation and is not knowledge but is a true purified truth and if we return to it, our previously gathered knowledge is then given life to, not in a confusing way, but with that truth of all beings throughout history being clarified there. Here the value of humans is then truly, realized deeply.

Our true experience and awareness is different for each human. That is important but there is nothing uniting in that even though it is important. We have to bring to life that which functions with that knowledge and here

is the truth of Buddhism and Zen. To return to that, we have to make efforts or we lose track of that clear mind and from that comes our misunderstanding. From our genetic origins come our individual opinions and our thinking that we are only our ego. We are actually a mind that is prior to that. If we realize that source, then we can give life to our differences from that original mind which we all share in common. We then will not get confused by our personal individual thoughts but instead give life to our differences and ideas. Doing this is where the truth of life has to lie, this is the truth of the Buddhas' way and this is what Master Kiso was saying when he said to not grind down the center pole of the millstone. If this is understood clearly, then our human way of living will be done with gratitude, using all kinds of techniques and crafts. If it is not like this, then it is only the circumstances of the world confusing us - this is very important to see carefully.

If we think we ourselves are what is alive here and get caught on an ego perception, then we lose track of that which is the truth. We are not living here as our small selves. We receive the air without which we cannot live and we never made efforts to make this air, we have been given it. This life energy which is supported by life, we did not create it, it is granted to us as well as the food we receive. While we work and make money to buy the food itself, we have never produced it, it has been given to us. We may have paid money for it but we have received it all from the heavens. We are not living from our own efforts, we are being given life and this awareness is what we have to awaken to. Our air, food and water of our life on this very day, our very existence, for this we have to know the joy and gratitude even for the smallest thing. These are the natural blessings that we are receiving and from the very beginning of humankind the great wisdom that we have received, the many efforts of so many working people that we have received, so where does this gratitude come from? It is not about such an explanation but for the smallest tiny bit of anything we have to see that we are being given it, receiving it and this is the mind that unites all beings .

Shinran said that "Amida Buddha's greatest vow is for saving all beings, and that great vow has been made for me, for me Amida Buddha made that vow. Amida is for all beings liberation but I am receiving that great joy." Because each person does not feel this, we do not realize this mind's origin. If we touch that mind everyone will feel that joy .

The sun's light, the moons radiance, the flowers blooming, the song of the bird, the work of all people in society. I receive everything. The heavens and earth are supporting me and all of humankind for me to be alive. This whole world revolves for this. I am so thankful, we have to see it as it is, or else we mistakenly think that we are alive according to our own power while it

is all beings who support us and to whom we should be thankful. We will then not be pulled around by our noisy thoughts but see clearly how all beings all of nature are supporting us and then our life becomes truly abundant. The brilliantly shining perfect moonlight of the fourfold wisdom as Master Hakuin has written. It is about this great wonder at life and its joy that Hakuin was writing.

Truly this is "the perfect moonlight of the Fourfold Wisdom!" Our wisdom shines round and bright and it is not that we have to do something to become complete. We already have received all potential and all grace, be joyful at this life we have been given, and know the joy of receiving the all embracing mind. Hold that as our base and if that wisdom works right, then we will not be attached and will have the wisdom of seeing everything equally. All of our senses will function perceiving this whole world equally and the Mysteriously Perceiving Wisdom will perceive this world not as for our own benefit but to see each thing with its own innate worth.

We all have the capability to see this and with all of our senses and our feelings can see each thing individually, exactly as it is. This is now the Perfecting of Action Wisdom and as we see that, we can respond to it precisely, as it needs to be responded to, and the actuality of each existence is acknowledged. From each thing we can know joy and gratitude and at this time what more do we need to seek? We think, "I need this, I need that! Must have this! Must have that!" But what else do we need? What unnecessary thinking we allow within ourselves when we have all this joy and what else do we need to seek other than that?

But we still think of this and of that and so our mind does not get settled into its place.

Joshu was asked by a monk, "One like me, who is like a street dog roaming around and going into this person's garbage can, and that kitchen's garbage bags asking this truth and that truth, one like me who is always looking around for some new truth, is there really a Buddha nature in me, in someone like that? And what is that Buddha nature like?"

To that question, Master Joshu answered one word, that was "mu".

This is from Master Joshu's experience. All beings, all existence, has a truth that is expressed completely as it is. Our eyes, if they truly see clearly, they are liberated and are empty - mu. In our eyes, if we are caught on anything at all then this won't be possible. Our ears also have to be empty, be mu or we cannot hear what is really resonating right here. Our nose, too, if we are caught on something we cannot even smell this fragrance that is right here. The same with our tasting and our awareness .If we are thinking of something else

we cannot perceive clearly. All our four senses have to be clear, this is the purified six roots. To be pure is our correct way of being, our mind and body being both "mu". This is what Hakuin expresses as "As the eternal tranquility of Truth reveals itself to us, this very place is the Land of Lotuses and this very body is the body of the Buddha."

As Ryokan said when there was a great earthquake,

If there is a tragedy, tragedy is fine
If sick, then sickness is fine,
If dying, then dying is fine.

That was not being said from some safe cozy place rather in the same tragedy and crisis to be saying. "Don't hurry around and be so panicked!" While in the same crisis, Ryokan is saying, "Don't lose your true self!"

Do not be confused by the circumstances! We lose track of our being alive. If our mind is pure and empty then we can receive and accept whatever comes and our wisdom will come forth spontaneously, naturally and obviously. If we think we cannot receive or accept something, that is an obstruction in our mind. Even in the worst crisis we go through it very evenly.

"As the eternal tranquility of Truth reveals itself to us, this very place is the Land of Lotuses and this very body is the body of the Buddha."

If our own mind is not confused nor attached, and can see calmly and with lucidity, then everything we see we can receive just as it is. To have a clear mind is the mind of Buddha. As it says in the Vimalakirti Sutra, this world is so hideous because our mind is so hideous and because of that we are uncomfortable in mind. To where does the world have to go until we are satisfied? We are endlessly unfulfilled in our desires but if we simply take things as they are, calmly, then endless wisdom is arising always.

Once a woman asked Joshu about the state of mind, asked him to explain what is the mind of Bodhidharma coming to China? Bodhidharma, at 140 years of age, went by ship from India to China. Always having lived in the world of the path and if he had any inner confusion he could not have done that. The truth of Bodhidharma could be done because it was not by coincidence but because he knew the deep, deep root of all humankind.

No matter what we encounter, to be "mu"!

Joshu answered the monk, "the oak tree in the garden"

That was the awareness of Bodhidharma's state of mind not from mental explanation but from the source of

life energy-this hundreds of years of tree's aliveness. the many thousands of years of truth are also expressed and manifested there. Master Joshu had not one speck in his mind, not any idea or sense of a small "I", only his direct perception, that huge tree soaring in the garden, THAT is the pure mind of Darumadaishi! He said it spontaneously, in clarity.

Of course for Joshu it was not only that tree, but the rock in the garden, everything we could see, everything our senses would perceive, all of it is pure. We see that superficial desire and rip it away to realize what is prior to our ego layer and touch the huge root source. For this we do zazen. In our life where everyone is working in the world, we do training, "Not enough yet! Not enough yet! That ego which is swirling around in murkiness, to purify that we sit.

In this way Joshu said, "the tree in the garden", and the state of mind of Bodhidharma, this we see here clearly and can look at it directly. If we see it with a dualistic mind we have no deep karmic connection to it. Using the koan of Joshu's "mu", we cut away all of our desires and caught places and realize that clear state of mind. If we allow that to be realized as well, we will connect with Master Joshu's awareness and the Buddha's truth. We will see and hear clearly, and this is what can happen. Not by gathering lots of information and book reading. This does not bring us to the Buddha's wisdom, rather to over and over again rip away our dualistic ideas. They are lacquered on hard and we are accustomed to our narrow ways of seeing, but instead to become that state of mind of clarity and then our activity of mind will be the same as that truth of the Buddha. We can live life from that wisdom which is no different from that of the Buddha.

In this way Hakuin says it, "As the eternal tranquility of Truth reveals itself to us, this very place is the Land of Lotuses and this very body is the body of the Buddha."

If we who are so caught on our ego ideas, if we dig in, and rip away and let go of that ego view, we then can know that place of no division between inside and outside and are able to know this world without ego perception. Each and every mind moment not coming from ego, realizing the thought of no-thought as thought, will be manifested until ongoing mind moments of clarity come forth one after the next, the fourfold wisdoms shine so brightly and clearly our mind arises, and when we are thoroughly liberated in this way, what more is there to seek?

We realized the place of deep serenity and this realized, for the first time we see everywhere, no matter how terrible, we can see it all as the truth directly and instantly. All existence can be perceived and be seen playing in this full taut state of mind. All beings are from the origin perfect, round, complete beings. From

the origin there is a great, round truth, so why do people get caught by such confused states of mind? This character is found in all humans, so why do we get twisted and fight with each other?

Jofu Bodhisattva of the Lotus Sutra would bow and say to everyone he would encounter, "I have nothing against you, you are truly a becoming Buddha" and then prostrate to everyone he met from his clear state of mind. He would prostrate to each person, each a potential Buddha. This is the true religion. If there is a religion we truly need, it is one where each person can honor each person and bow to each person. This is what humankind needs the most.

This is where Zen works. It lets go of, and rips away all ego and then connects all beings in this clear original mind. We can meet and unite, helping all and being among all, and there Master Hakuin is showing us what is the truth of all humankind and showing us the way of liberation of all humankind.

We have to take this life energy of this life time which we have been given, and must polish this deep faith and determination and walk this path of liberation, that is my prayer.

Sogenji 2007 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

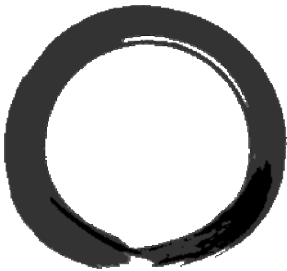
June
6-12 osesshin
16-22 kosesshin
26-30 kosesshin

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