

曹源一滴水

Number 78

August 2008

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OBON, 2008

From the first of this month through to today, August fifteenth, we have been giving offerings and chanting sutras for those who are in form and those who are not, those who are visible and those who are invisible. For those beings that are not satisfied, we have tried to offer them a little more, so that there is more available for them we have done the ceremony for feeding the hungry ghosts, a "segakki".

We have just done the ceremony called the "Sanmon Segaki" or "mountain gate feeding of the hungry ghosts ceremony" where we borrow everyone's energy and with this bright vow we work on purifying the whole of society.

Originally from the 15th of April until the 15th day of the seventh month it is an official training period and during that training period each person deepens and purifies their state of mind. Everyday, all day long we are intently purifying and deepening. We make a specific vow that for ninety days we will intensely focus on deepening our essence. We vow to realize this serene, deep nirvana-like state of mind. This is the meaning of a training period or "ango".

But people are not that simple and all does not always go so smoothly, so on this day of the completion of the training period, and the obon celebration, there is a final reviewing of ourselves. We examine if we have truly been without extraneous thinking and delusive mind moments, we look at whether we have been honestly living with our Vow the whole time or if our mind is not yet that abundant and spacious. While we say we will spare no effort have we truly been that deeply devoted to realizing this Vow? Or have we been laxly empty handed and only wasted our time during this just completed training period?

We must check to be sure this precious opportunity has not been wasted. What has just happened and how will we now continue with a new training period? We who are full of ideas and thoughts and blind activity, we gather here in order to purify our cluttered state of mind but then, how easy it is to lose our intention and not realize our goal. We have to review our mistakes and

see clearly and precisely what was not satisfactory, what was not yet sufficient and where did we not give it our everything?

We have to look deeply within and see clearly, and this is traditionally done standing in front of a senior person with more experience. We speak our sense of how we see our behaviour has been, and if we don't do that, after a period of time goes by, we will just think it has all been fine. Meanwhile, even though we are receiving offerings from others for our efforts in practice, we spend a training period having wasted our time and that is a great mistake.

So that this does not happen, we review our behaviour and deepen our state of mind and vow to go ever deeper and ever further in the profound realization of our original mind. In the dojo, the older monks help with this review. If a person is not aware of their own weak places, the older monks help them to see their unskillfulness and where they need to work. The younger monks listen to what they say with humility and make a new passionate vow to realize this path and correct their past mistakes, or training cannot happen. Originally the fifteenth of August is the designated day for that.

From there we vow to make a new start and give it everything. On this day of the fifteenth, we pledge that during these next ninety days we will purify society and with a humble mind we will give everything we are to society's purification.

One of the Buddha's top ten disciples was Mokuren Sonja. He was the one who was most developed in supernatural powers and he was an arhat, meaning he was free from all attachments and had supernatural powers which he could use well.

He used his supernatural powers to see the whereabouts of his mother, where was she? Using his supernatural powers he was astonished to see that she was in the circle of hell where when any food or drink that was brought to her mouth, it all turned into flames before she could eat or drink any of it. She was skinny as a rail, and he did not know how to relieve her of this suffering. He was in such great fear he tried everything

to help her, he went to that circle of hell using his supernatural powers and took her food and drink, exclaiming how skinny she had become and how very sorry he was to see her like that and told her he had brought her food and drink. He was confident that since he had supernatural powers she could probably eat and drink his offering and she was so thankful for his kindness and thanked him and thanked him. She was so thirsty and hungry and now she hoped she could be relieved.

But when she put the food in her mouth again it would burst into flames and the same was true with the drink, his supernatural powers were not sufficient to save her and he was so miserable that he could not do it, he went straight to see the Buddha and repented to the Buddha himself and asked him how to liberate his suffering mother.

The Buddha said that for his mother and for everyone in the world there was the serious problem of attached love. Loving her own child more than others' children, and always wanting to make it best for her own son, like all mother's do, while his mother had made great efforts to bring up her own son, in her mind she still held on to an attached love and this was the symbol for that which all people have. His mother was manifesting that attachment of all parents. The only way to relieve that is that she has to be helped by a person of training who truly has no attached thoughts and is alive in this world now. Only with those efforts and offerings could his mother be helped. Then with that purification his mother would probably be saved.

The Buddha taught him that depending on how pure the mind of the person of training is, they can liberate another with these words which pierce through hell. With that teaching we offer to the hungry ghosts in this traditional ceremony at the end of Obon. So on this day, repenting our deluded behaviour, we vow to liberate all tangled attachment of all beings. This is why a truly pure person of training has to read the sutra and with that sutra's special teaching of Kannon, we can then break right through that hell. The Buddha taught this sutra to Mokuren Sonja.

In the sutra we have the names of the seven buddhas and we use these names to receive their merit. When we recite them and the special words of the sutra, light and pierces through that hell. We can then break through the realm of hell and with that, then he, Mokuren Sonja, would be able to save his mother. The Buddha taught him how depending on how pure the mind of the person of training is, they can liberate another with these words which pierce through hell. With that teaching we offer to the hungry ghosts in this traditional ceremony at the end of Obon.

If today we were to bring this remedy up with people

they would say they cannot believe such a thing, that it all has no meaning and no reality. This kind of non thinking person is in the majority and that is why this world today is so cluttered, dark and murky. It is because there is no true deep awe. It is because there is no awe that there is no repentance when there is awe there is repentance and so it is not meaningless to be in awe and fear, since that brings us a cutting edge through deep seeing and deep wisdom. We are then able to see how things should be. There are many different kinds of suffering in this world, both material and psychological. So many tragic things happen because of our ignorance, our greed, and our anger. Because of our ignorance these three poisons that are material, such as desires or self satisfaction, cannot be removed. These desires are never ending as long as we are alive and because we cannot satisfy our desires we get angry and because we cannot fulfill them we get confused and people become angry and make society even more chaotic.

Hakuin said to be in awe and if we are not in deep awe, that is surely the road to hell. Why is this world so confused and conflicted? Why are the weakest people the ones who are in deepest suffering? To see this sharply, humbly and directly, to really perceive what is actually going on, not from our ego view but with our deep seeing and to realize the true resolution is what is most necessary. We cannot simply say it has no meaning. People today are clever but they do not use their sharp seeing and that makes weak people even more confused.

The Buddha broke through the deep hell. So what is this hell which is was being broken through? These words that are so impossible to understand, is this what makes it a hell breaker? Of course he would not teach something that unclear.

As Master Unmon said himself,

"I won't ask you about up to the fifteenth of the month, but what about after the fifteenth of the month?"

Those great hell breaking words of the Buddha, Unmon said it like this. So how about it? This training period up until today, have you made the efforts? I won't ask about that but on this day of deep reckoning, how about it? From today onward, in what state of mind will you lead your life? Each and every person must look at this sharply! Master Unmon glared at the assembly and asked this fiercely, but no one could answer. It is not that they could not answer but no one could match that state of mind of Master Unmon, they probably said this or that, but no one could get anywhere near that state of mind of Master Unmon. Not a single one could reach that quality of state of mind. And so Unmon said to his transmitted to disciple Kyorin who later received Unmon's Dharma, he pleaded, "please answer for us since we cannot answer" and Master Unmon replied,"

Every day is a good day!"

"Each day and every day, each day, all of it, this is a fine day" this is how most will interpret these words but this is nowhere near the state of mind of Master Unmon, who would also be in that state of mind when there are crises, earthquakes, deep resentment great unexpected hatred and within that we cannot so mildly just say, "today it is a little difficult for me". But if we try stay in that world of what we like and don't like, that is not zen. Up until today we don't bother with that, but from today, what state of mind will you do your training with? No one could answer this or even get anywhere near it.

Master Unmon said, "Every day is a good day", but this is not about an interpretation. Can anyone realize this directly? Most probably no one can possibly realize this, to say every day is to not be moved around by anything that comes down. We have to instead drink it down and not just that, but to believe with absolute deepest faith, and vow deeply. Without that deep vow then it doesn't work. In every second that deep vow and belief has to be there or it is like going into war without a weapon, like being in a world full of mozo and blind meaningless activity without faith and deep vow. We will be pushed and tromped by peoples delusions and Master Unmon was saying clearly that no matter what we may come by we will not be moved around. Nothing will prevent us from realizing our vow. No matter what conceptual idea we may hold our true meaning is not about that, the true meaning of our being born has to be deeply held or we are not worth living in this world - seeing that clearly we are not moved around in our mind no matter what comes along.

Right now they are holding the Olympics in Peking, those who want a gold medal so much, or a half as much, a silver medal and also how many tens of thousands or ten thousands or a thousand who worked so hard every day yet couldn't even participate! How many of them there are and when we think of them we have to settle into our goal deeply and not just play like most and have a good time to feel pleasant like everyone else. We have to throw it all away and for our most precious goal we have to put everything into realizing it completely. Not everyone can join in but to toss it aside because of that is not the point. Rather, to be able to join it and have a medal is not the prize, the prize is the throwing of everything we are into it no matter what. And not just because there is a sweet thing coming to us somewhere or somehow. It is not that kind of indulgent world ... what is the goal, the point? See it clearly and if you don't do that, then you will be stuck with your own small satisfaction and happiness and you will be pushed around by societies ways and whims and and there is no end to that.

We have gathered here with a deep vow and we have

to have the deep commitment to realize that the piercing through of deep hell is all about this, to not look for some occult world and bring in concepts but to see what is it that will revitalize all of us. For this the Buddha and all the patriarchs used their wisdom. It is not for our own satisfaction or we will get stuck and hit a wall. All of this has to be done with this huge wide open state of mind.

In the world today Zen is usually known for zazen and people often think that if you simply do zazen you will somehow improve. During a certain era it was thought that if neurotic, schizophrenic or other psychologically challenged people would do zazen they would return to a healthy frame of mind. This mistaken idea was a popular belief for a time.

It is only a healthy mind that can concentrate in Zen. If one is not healthy enough to be able to concentrate in ordinary daily life that makes it difficult to carry on this essence in even a usual period of zazen.

Our mind is not living in isolation, this mind is in existence along with many things; our moral sense, our way of using our body, our way of aligning our breathing and also our way of being in our human relationships. These are all of equal importance, but at each time and each place these have to harmonize and work together or, for example, it can deeply affect our way of being in human relationships. If we don't know how to align and balance all of these aspects, and just think that if our mind is calm everything will be fine, we make a big mistake.

For settling the mind we have zazen and if our mind is settled and clear, we naturally will want to live in a correct way. This is so not just because we do zazen but because the mind from zazen can see clearly what is most correct. It is not Zen that is correct or that following Zen's strict rules is correct, but that following those rules is a matter of course, If we have a baseball or soccer game we always have rules. There is no soccer game without rules, and if there are no rules, no one would believe in it, there would be no team play and the game would not work at all.

In society today, as well for both soccer and rugby, the state of mind of a team's players is considered very important. A wisdom of group living is very important, we live in society as a group, so the state of mind of every member of the team is very important. It not about enduring whatever happens, but about everyone becoming one in order to realize a goal. To naturally have this become second nature is one of the very positive points of teamplay, whether in rugby, or soccer or society and so these rules become very important. The stricter they are the more interesting the game is, and this is also how zazen works.

The more the zazen deepens, the less we compromise our behaviour. When we sit as a group and all of us harmonize we align our body, our breathing, and our state of mind. All of us do this or each person's goal is lost. If we sit in a group we have rules, and we align with these rules as a matter of course in our practice.

Zazen is for not dwelling in our selfishness but for realizing the state of mind of the Buddha's awakening. That great person of awakening, the Buddha - to realize the truth of that awakening and see that we all have the same state of mind to be awakened. We must want to awaken to that state of mind. For this we do zazen and therefore also there has to be a true and correct transmission from teacher to student as was the case from the Buddha to his disciple Makakasho, and from Makakasho to Ananda. In this way it has been truthfully handed down and received with both the receiving side and the transmitting side. This is the giving and the receiving of the precepts.

The true rules are received from the true teacher and by living in accordance with the true rules we can know the Buddha's way of living. We can then get closer to living in the way of Buddha's awakening and for that we have the giving and receiving of precepts. This is the deep, meticulous belief between teacher and disciple, there is a deep passion and a firm stance here. This is the giving and receiving of the precepts.

Our living in accordance with the way of the heavens and living in accordance with the Zen precepts is realizing our deepest mind. This is Zen and precepts, and with this combination we can realize deep awakening and live in it in a harmonious, peaceful way.

Master Hyakujo wrote guidelines of how to be in Zen training, describing how people in training can best live, offering rules for living that respect for each other. But before there was even a way of practice such as sanzen, we had the precepts. The patriarchs all did ordination first, they learned the five precepts before everything else and that was the beginning of their deep faith.

We so easily make mistakes through our bodies and emotions, with the precepts we are able to first purify and align these, and to align our thoughts, so that we are able to live the Path of the Buddha. Then, while we are seeking the Buddha's way, we do not stray far from it. This is why we always hold the precepts important.

The way of Zen and the precepts are one and the same. A zazen version of Zen and living the precepts must be one and the same, or the path of Zen will not deepen. When the precepts become second nature to us, our mind naturally becomes quiet and this is where Zen and precepts, while being two individual things, melt together becoming one.

Precepts is a word which in India is said "cilla", which means "the well aligned way". The precepts, samadhi and wisdom are the three pillars of the Buddha Way. First, there are the precepts, then samadhi, and then the wisdom that is born from that samadhi. To bring these together is the way of the Buddha. In the Six Paramitas we find: charity, precepts, patience, good efforts, samadhi, and wisdom. The second of the six paramitas is precepts, the fifth is samadhi and the sixth is wisdom. This is the path of the Bodhisattva.

The Buddha was called a Person of Great Wisdom because of his way of living and relating to people which was so well aligned, deeply connected and clear seeing. He was called the Great Wise One who was well-aligned and fearless. To act from that place we must acknowledge our mistaken uses of mouth, body and mind. These have to be recognized as the source of our unskillful behaviour which bring suffering to ourselves and others.

The three mistaken ways of using the body are killing, violence, and sexual mis-behaviour. The mistaken use of the mouth is to indulge in lying, talking against others, hypocrisy, and flattering in a way that we don't believe. These are the four mistaken behaviours of the mouth. The mistaken behaviours of mind are greed, anger and ignorance. All these are the source of our ongoing mistakes of mouth, body and mind. We hurt other people with these ways of acting and that makes us deluded and confused. We have to align well and fearlessly with the teaching of the precepts and then we have in each place and each time a way to behave with awareness.

In the time of the Buddha, when people did not behave that way, then rules were made. This was said to prevent bad behaviour so these were all brought into being at very serious times when the need arose. There were 500 precepts for women 250 for men because they were all given on the spot and there were many who broke them. Today as well in any country when people break laws it may be only a few who go against rules at the beginning but eventually there are many and more and more rules have to be made to align this situation. When the numbers of people increase, the need for laws and rules also increases.

But the point is not to have many precepts, the point is, from the view of Zen, that they are all from One Mind, and if this one mind is true and correct we will not live in a mistaken way. If our mind is held in an incorrect way that is how we will behave and that is why Daruma Daishi's precepts are called the One Mind Precepts. If we awaken to that One Mind, then naturally those precepts will be born from the awakened mind. When the Mind is clear, the precepts will be obvious and we will naturally live in a correct way and so the first words are always the same in each precept, "From the

true profound, clear and mysterious Mind." That empty Mind, we add delusions and attachments all the time and to return to that original mind is why the precepts are so important.

In the Yuikyo Sutra, given by the Buddha just before he died, the Buddha teaches that by observing the Buddhist Precepts, his disciples would always find him alive.

The Buddha first taught the words of his awakening but that is not the first time that this truth existed. He was awakened to the way of nature that had always been, just as it is, and he put the way that nature had always been into words as the precepts. This is the great natural law of Dharma, to be here naturally and follow naturally. If we all let go of our thinking, we will naturally act that way spontaneously. That which is naturally how it is, is the basis of the precepts. When we live in this natural mind and everything we do is the precepts, this is the point of view of Zen.

In Zen the earth, the sun and all the myriad things together are working as one; not by everyone's going their own way. The way of things growing, and the way of the environment, all of these areas are working according to the law of nature. The way a forest is, is the way of a forest. The way of weeds is the way of weeds. Each moves as it should.

In spring all the flowers bloom and in the autumn all the trees in the mountains turn colors, sparrows chirp "chun chun", crows cry "ka ka" the way of hearing may be different in the USA, Europe, and Japan, but the birds do not change only the way of hearing them changes. This is the natural way it is for them and not depending upon the country.

We cannot get an eggplant from a cucumber seed or a tomato from a cucumber seed. This is nature and this is also precepts and we are embraced by the heavens and earth and we are cultivated by them. In the same way that we are raised through the ways of nature, and of the heavens and earth, so the precepts are the life of Buddha. We do not have to be Buddhist to observe them, it is all the same way of nature whether Buddhist, Islam, or Christian there is no difference in precepts. It is the understanding of the way of nature and living that way which is the precepts and so they do not originate from the time of the Buddha's birth. They have always been and it is the teaching of the Buddha for us to be in oneness with the ways of nature. These are the precepts.

In old days of Japan and today in Japan this way has connected heavens and earth and it does not get old, new, born, or die, nor get dirty nor pure nor increase nor decrease. This is how Zen and the precepts are one and the same. In daily life, it then becomes expressed in

the way people move, act and behave.

In this way the ancients taught us to live and observe. For this to continue we have to learn what the ancients said so we can teach those who come later how to live without mistaking this and to be in accordance with these precepts is why we have the transmission of the Zen teaching from Master to disciple.

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

2008	2009
October	January
5-11 kosesshin	4-10 osesshin
16-22 osesshin	
26-30 kosesshin	
November	
8-12 kosesshin	
17-23 osesshin	
25-29 kosesshin	
December	
4-10 Rohatsu	
14-20 Osesshin	
24-28 kosesshin	

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