



PLUM MOUNTAIN NEWS

Volume 9.3

Autumn 2002

Dear members and friends,

The Japanese maple by the front gate is turning, brightly alive with autumn colors. The highlight for our Sangha this fall was Roko Ni-Osho's visit in mid-September. Genko, Taishin, Josen and I shared a dinner with her the night before mini-sesshin (half-day Zen retreat); and for mini-sesshin we somehow managed to seat 25 people in the zendo (meditation hall). I very much enjoyed Ni-Osho-san's Teisho (formal Dharma Talk) and much of it has been transcribed (with grateful help from Dee Seishun Endelman) for this issue of PMN. The day after mini-sesshin she and I had a chance to talk privately while we circumnavigated Seward Park. The Dharma relations between the two of us and between Chobo-ji and Hoen-ji (where Ni-Osho is abbot in Syracuse, NY) are deepening and heart warming. I plan to visit her temple next summer.

At our Autumn Sesshin (September 21st - September 27th) attendance fluctuated between twelve and eighteen people, and we were a little short on some of our most senior people. This meant that many of the posts had to be covered by substitutes. All in all however, Autumn Sesshin ran extraordinarily smoothly, everything got done that needed doing with very little prompting or instruction. Genko Blackman was our Dai-Tenzo (chief cook), and those of you who remember her last rotation in this post will recall what a good

cook she is. She did not disappoint us in the least, in fact we were all delighted whenever a meal was served. She was ably assisted by John (Daijo) Lowrance, who also covered the Shika (host-manager) position and occasionally stepped in as the Jikijitsu (timekeeper) when Scott (Ishin) Stolnack was away at class. Carol (Jokai) Perron was our Jisha (tea server), assisted by Peter (Shinkon) Glynn. Carolyn (Josen) Stevens filled the Densu (chant

Roko's and my talks, you will find an announcement of the annual NW Dharma Association "Sweet Teachings & Dessert Potluck," and of course all the information needed to make your reservations for our full-time, eight day Rohatsu Sesshin, our Zen retreat held the first week of each December. By the way, we have heard from Camp Indianola (where we hold Rohatsu Sesshin) that their fundraising drive to purchase the property was successful!

They have sent us "a warm thank you" for our support.

Now I would like to update you on a few of doings of some of our members. Tom (Shodo) Degroot had a new show of his art recently at the Zeitgeist Cafe (9/5 - 10/2). Kentaro Toyama who attended our last two week-long sesshins is in Accra, Ghana teaching math for a term at a new college that just opened there. Taag (Doshin) Ebert has moved to Minneapolis, MN and had a departure dinner with many Zen friends on October 11th.

Doshin plans to return for Rohatsu Sesshin. Genko, Carol (Jokai) Perron and I will be attending Harvest Sesshin (11/1-11/10) at DaiBosatsu in NY, and Jokai will stay on through DaiBosatsu's Rohatsu Sesshin. Wayne (Shoki) Grytting has just had his first book published, American Newspeak: The Mangling of Meaning for Power and Profit, New Society Publishers. Congratulations! He had a "New Book Shower" last Saturday night, October 19th. I've only read a couple chapters so far, and I can't put it down.

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Roko Sherry Chayat Ni-Osho and some of our Seattle Sangha

leader) post, while also overseeing our finances as Fusu (treasurer). I wish to make a special thanks to Peggy (Kochi) Smith-Venturi for doing such a lovely job with altar flowers.

I selected the Dharma Talk from the fifth day of Autumn Sesshin to be transcribed for this issue because I like the case examined "Beautiful Snowflakes" and it is a little on the short side, as we have a lot to cover in this issue of PMN. Besides

Not surprisingly, Shoki is funny while being serious, and gives the reader a sharply focused lens on current events via "doublethink." Here are the first two paragraphs of his book:

After the tragedy of September 11th, a tiny window opened in America's cultural landscape. Besides feeling vulnerable and outraged, many people paused to engage in an activity quite foreign to our customs, an activity that required journeying into the most infrequently visited regions of the cerebral cortex, an activity known as reflection. And what we reflected about were the complaints that flooded in from around the world that Americans are shallow, self centered, and materialistic.

Let's be open about this. We are. And we're doing a damn good job of selling it to the rest of the world. So there. But critics of America's superficiality leave unanswered all lot of really nifty questions, like, just how shallow is America? How shallow can you get if you really try? Can you make advances in narcissism? Can spiritual aspirations be met with a new toaster oven? Can a society be united by shared memories of advertising jingles? How long can a TV news anchor smile? How much of yourself can you use sell and still have brain cells left to tie your shoes? These are the issues you are about to see cracked wide open as we explore the cutting-edge advances being made in one of our nation's leading industries: Newspeak.

On Monday, October 28th, 7pm, I will be giving a talk for the Virupa Ecumenical Institute at the Sakya Monastery, titled "An American Experience in Japanese Buddhism." If you are interested in attending the cost is \$10 or \$5 for seniors and students, call 206-789-2573. The Sakya Monastery is located at 108 NW 83rd Street, Seattle, WA 98117.

Please take the time to enjoy our many offerings, and the turning leaves this autumn.

With Gassho,

Genjo

Autumn Sesshin 2002 Closing Incense Poem (Sept. 21 - 27)

*The cool breeze of late summer announces
Autumn's return*

*No end to the changing seasons or the phases
of the moon.*

*Who is not subject to the laws
of cause and effect?*

*A seagull passing
leaves no trace.*

Sweet Teachings & Dessert Potluck Sat., Nov. 2nd, 7-9 p.m.



The Northwest Dharma Association is sponsoring its 4th annual "Sweet Teachings & Dessert Potluck" at the Keystone Church, 5019 Keystone Place N. (corner of Sunnyside and 50th Ave. N, about a half-mile west of I-5). Teachers from various Buddhist traditions will help us explore this year's theme: how awakened can busy people in the modern world become? How necessary are retreats and monastic life? What are the differences in the practices and results for lay and monastic practitioners of the Buddha Dharma? Teachers will include Anita Feng, Dharma Sound Zen Center; Santidhammo Bhikku, Atamayatarama Buddhist Monastery; and a teacher from the Sahambhala Center of Seattle. Bring your favorite dessert or tea to share. Plates and silverware will be provided.

Rohatsu Sesshin 12/1 - 12/9

Please make your reservations soon. The cost of sesshin is \$310 (less dues). No part-time participation is allowed. We will leave from our Zendo, 1811 20th Ave., at 4 p.m. on the 1st. It would be great if everyone who is coming to Sesshin was at the Zendo by 3:00 p.m. so that we can pack up and make car pool arrangements to Camp Indianola, (360) 297-2223. We will begin formal zazen after a light dinner. Rohatsu ends around 10:00 a.m. on Monday, *December 9th*, but it takes time to pack up and get back to Seattle, so please don't plan departure flights before 2pm on the 9th.

Transportation:

We will be carpooling from the Zendo at 4 pm. If you are coming from the airport you can take Shuttle Express from the baggage claim to the Zendo address above for about \$21 per person, \$50 for four people, \$60 for seven (travel time is 25-45min.) Their number is (800) 487-7433, <http://www.shuttleexpress.com/> (make reservations early). Or, you can take either the #174 or #194 Metro buses from the baggage claim area to downtown, and then transfer to either the #11, #12 or #43 going to the Zendo on Capitol Hill (travel time is about 1.5 hrs.). Total bus fair \$2.

The route to Camp Indianola: travel north on I-5 to Edmonds, and follow the signs to the Edmonds-Kingston Ferry. From the ferry dock in Kingston, travel 0.3 miles and turn left onto the West Kingston Road. About .5 miles later turn left again on South Kingston Road. Continue 3.8 miles to Indianola Road and turn left. Turn again left at the stop sign. Drive approx. 0.5 miles down the road and take the last left (forced "T" turn). Follow signs to Camp Indianola. Proceed straight ahead at the crossroads. Parking is available in the main lot as you come into camp, right above the main lodge. From there come straight downhill past the main lodge on foot to the "Totem Lodge."

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Hekiganroku: Case 97

The Diamond Sutra's "The Transgression is Wiped Out"

(Excerpts from Roko Ni-Osho's Teisho, 9/15/02)

ENGO'S INTRODUCTION

Even if now you hold fast and now you let go, you are not yet an expert. To infer three things from one example is not enough. Even if you can move heaven and earth, dumbfound the four quarters, crash like thunder, flash like lightning, upset the ocean, overturn mountains, and pour down like torrents of rain, you still fall far short of it. Is there anyone among you who can control the center of the heavens and the axis of the earth? See the following.

MAIN SUBJECT

The Diamond Sutra says, "Virtuous men and women who receive this teaching are downtrodden. Their unfortunate destiny is the inevitable result of karma committed in their past mortal lives. By virtue of their present misfortunes, the effects of their past will be worked out and then they will be in a position to realize supreme enlightenment."

SETCHO'S VERSE

Moving the jewel, merit is rewarded.
Free from merit,
The jewel reflects no more.
Truly meritless,
The heavens seek in vain.
Gautama, Gautama,
Do you know the secret?
Everything lies open
Says Setcho again.

It's a great pleasure to be here, to sit with all of you, to join my dear Dharma Brother, to be in the lap of Buddhadharm in Seattle. And it's also a little bit confusing for me because, yesterday, I was doing Sesshin with Olympia Zen Center and they follow completely different styles. I have a very bad memory. So I was thinking today, "I have to remember the name of this zendo!" [laughter]...

I chose this case because this evening is

the eve of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. And we have been sitting in what we call in Judaism "the Days of Awe." The High Holy Days are called the Days of Awe. How appropriate for our practice! The day that nothing can be taken for granted. All of our usual complacency must be seen through. Last Saturday, the 7th, began with such a moving prayer: "Here I stand, trembling before You, revealed as this clueless one! Standing empty handed, not knowing, filled with remorse. Truly looking deeply within."

I brought some quotes from reflections that we say at Rosh Hashanah morning service. "Rabbi Eleazer said, 'Repent one day before your death'. So his disciples asked, 'But does anyone know the day of his or her death?' No?! So, Rabbi Eleazer kindly responded, 'That is exactly why you should repent today!' " [laughter] Today! This is It! All of us think we'll have another chance, another Sesshin, right? Dogen Zenji said: "To study the Way is to study the Self." The Self! But that's not where he ended. "To study the Self" is what? (Student: "Is to forget the Self") Yes, "to forget the Self!" To repent requires more than acts of repentance, it requires a reversal of our whole being. We who have been lost in the maze of selfishness must find our way to This! "To study the Self is to forget the self. To forget the Self is to be enlightened by all things." Not just the things that we think are helpful for our practice, but by all things!

Who has not tortured himself or herself with the idea that "Oh, I'm such a terrible Zen student!," "I can't do this!," or "this is too much!" [laughter] But stopping with these laments withholds our best energies from the work of Turning. No need to be stuck in how dreadful or limited we feel, right? So, it is written: "Turn from evil and do good." What are our three fundamental precepts? [I shall not cause harm of any kind. I will live in and be a servant to all that is good. I shall cultivate the purity that is our nature.] It's also in the Psalm 34-14. "You have done wrong? Then counteract it by doing right." So simple! [laughter] But truly it is! We acknowledge, we repent, we confess and we turn. Right here, right now, today. And

then it concludes with this wonderful Zen saying: "There are three prerequisites for turning. Here they are: eyes that see, ears that listen and an understanding heart." We have exactly the same teachings in Zen.

An understanding heart. Sometimes we forget about this in our Zen practice. "An understanding heart" means to have compassion for oneself, one's miserable, lowly self. To have this compassion, this tenderness, allows us to be vehicles of the Dharma. Without this, if we're walking around feeling grim, dour, convinced of our own terrible nature how can we help anybody? We can't. Then the text continues: "If you have all three, eyes that see, ears that listen and an understanding heart, you are ready to turn and be healed." ...Some feel desperate to figure it out, figure out life, figure out practice, and get it! Why such chaos? Why such uncertainty? There must be an answer! They say there are answers to koans, there must be an answer to my life! [laughter]

...This koan today is quite unusual. Let me ask you. Why is it so unusual? (Student: Nobody gets hit!) [laughter] Exactly, nobody gets hit because this koan is one big hit. What is another way of putting it? (Genjo: There's no dialogue). Right, there's no Zen Osho and foolhardy young monk. This koan is taken from an amazingly intimate verse from my favorite Buddhist text, the Diamond Sutra. So many times I've read and chanted it and it just never ceases to amaze me.

I remember when we first bought the property at DaiBosatsu Zendo in the Catskill Mountains. We had been given a big bequest, a big amount of money. Then, suddenly, there was the world fuel crisis and everything fell apart. Inflation went sky high. Money didn't pay what it was supposed to pay for and, there we were, really stuck. We didn't have the money to create the building that we had pledged to make, the monastery that Eido Roshi had given his life to. It was a time of great introspection. Days of Awe.

One day, Eido Roshi said, "We will chant

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the Diamond Sutra.” Chant the Diamond Sutra! Well, here’s another verse: “If, on the one hand, a virtuous person performs in the morning as many charitable acts of self denial as the sand grains of the Ganges and performs as many again in the noon day and as many again in the evening and continues doing so throughout numberless ages (that’s a lot, right?) And, if on the other hand, anyone listens to this teaching with faith and without contention, the latter will be the more blessed. But how can any comparison be made with one who writes it down, retains it and explains it to others?” You may think this is just exaggerated text, but that would be wrong.

This phrase, “listens to this teaching with faith” is really something. Faith that’s generated through this incomparable Sutra, by chanting and studying it over and over and over and over is quite something! Somebody was talking to me about doubt. And, as you know, the three fundamental basics for training are, what? (Students: “Great Faith, Great Doubt and Great Determination.”) Hakuin Zenji, our great ancestor, had this to say: “My humble advice to you distinguished persons who study the profound mystery of the Buddhadharma is this: your close examination of your self must be as urgent as saving your own head were it ablaze. Today, your efforts to penetrate into your own original nature must be as tireless as the pursuit of an indispensable thing. Your attitude toward the verbal teachings of the Buddha’s and the Ancestors must be as hostile as that towards a deadly enemy.” In the Diamond Sutra, it says, “My teaching is like a raft.” When you reach the other shore, don’t go carrying it around! And Hakuin goes on, “In Zen, he who does not bring strong doubt to bear upon the koans is a dissolute, knavish, good for nothing.” So, if you have doubt, congratulations, wonderful!

Therefore, it is said, “Underlying great doubt, there is great satori.” Where there is thorough questioning, there will be a thoroughgoing experience of awakening. Do not say, “Since my worldly duties are many and troublesome, I cannot spare time to solidify my doubt firmly.” [laughter]

Such a convenient excuse: “Well, I can’t go to that Sesshin, or even to morning sit, because of this and that and the other thing.” “I can’t spare the time to solidify my doubt firmly.” That’s an interesting phrase, isn’t it? “Solidify your doubt.” Our doubt is the raft. We may think: “Since my thoughts are always flying about in confusion, I lack the power to apply myself to genuine concentration on my koan! How can I do this practice, my thoughts are everywhere!” However, we must come to realize that each and every thought is nothing but Great Doubt manifest. This is turning, turning. We learn that what we thought was interfering with our practice, is the very teaching of our life....

So, we did this Diamond Sutra chanting on the 21st day of each month, which we called DaiBosatsu Day. Now, it’s called “Mandala Day.” One of the residents at that time, 1974 or 1975, was Kanzan (after Kanzan Egen Zenji Daiosho). Kanzan was really quite a trip, I think because he had taken a few too many trips. [laughter] He was a brilliant guy but clueless. If we were doing Jihatsu [nested eating bowls] he would get it all mixed up (gesturing confusion). What am I doing here? “I know nothing!” Kanzan was a great proponent of “know nothing,” but what he did do was memorize the entire Diamond Sutra, from the beginning to the end, in English and Sino Japanese. And we built the monastery.

Engo says in his introduction, “Even if now you hold fast and now you let go” What does this mean? If “holding fast” is entering into deep oneness, then “letting go” is going about our lives. The Absolute and Relative, sameness and differentiation. Or, like that song The Gambler, “You got to know when to hold ’em, and know when to fold them.” [laughter] (Student: and “Know when to run!”) Yes, know when to run. Lots of us feel that we know when to run. About 30 minutes into the sitting! [laughter]

“To infer three things from one example is not enough.” You may succeed in your various enterprises. You may pass several koans. Still, not It. You may see a Whole in its parts. You may see the parts

in the Whole. Still, not It. Some great breakthrough? Still, not It. What about turning the wheel of dharma? Is there any one among you who can control the center of the heavens and the axis of the earth? See the following.

I want to read you something from Endless Vow, by Soen Roshi, our beloved Dharma Grandfather. When he was a young monk, in 1931, he wrote: “On October 3rd, I made a vow to live on one meal a day following the teachings of early Buddhist scriptures. This has resulted in a new clarity and expansiveness in my life. Now I realize that eating white rice is not healthy and I am changing to brown rice and only using brown sugar.” Sound familiar? So he wrote this haiku:

Vast solitude
My thinning body
Transparent autumn.

Not yet! The next entry in his journal: “Since making that vow, I have been experiencing the joy of practicing it. One evening, I hear a Zen teacher tell in his lecture about eating 49 sweet rice cakes at one time when he was young. I am appalled! But, on my way back, I stop at a bakery and buy one of those cakes. It is like the initial gunshot breaking the silence. It creates explosive desire! One calls for another and another. I become so angry, even while devouring this unhealthy food, that I feel like a demon. Then a haiku:

Bodily desire!
Viciously raging
This barren night. [Laughter]

... So, today, we hear “Virtuous men and women who receive this teaching are downtrodden. Their unfortunate destiny is the inevitable result of karma committed in their past mortal lives.” Now, immediately, we in 21st Century America think, “Well, that sounds suspiciously like ‘blame the victim,’ or ‘You’re bad, now you’re suffering.’ You deserve it.” That’s the way it sounds to us, right? So, to read the Diamond Sutra requires that we really enter into a “no knowing” condition of mind.... Do I have ears to listen? Or is my mind stuffed with fixed ideas?...

There's another interesting passage in Endless Vow. It's a story that Soen Roshi often told: "There was a foolish servant whose master said to him, 'This staff is for the most foolish person in the world. Find someone more foolish than yourself and then give it to him or her. Until then, always keep it with you.' The servant took the staff. Feeling mortified, he looked for someone more foolish than himself but could not find such a person. (Such a wise servant!) Meanwhile the master became gravely ill. He was near death. He was bound for a destination far, far away. The fool asked, 'Where are you going?' 'I don't know,' the master answered. 'What route are you taking?' 'I don't know that either.' 'Are you all packed?' 'Not a bit.' Slapping his knee, the fool yelled, 'You are leaving for a long journey and you don't know where you are going, you don't know how you are getting there and you aren't ready to go. Indeed, you are the greatest fool in the world!' The servant gave the staff to his master." [Laughter] And Soen Roshi's would comment: "We all have such a staff, even though it is invisible. Thanks to this staff, this world is enjoyable and the next world is enjoyable. It is said, 'someone who does not know is Buddha.'"

You know, all of us have experience with being downtrodden. All of us have experience with what the Buddha taught in his first sermon. which was what? (Students: "Life is suffering.") You know, although the First Noble Truth is typically stated that way, it is rather better said: "the Noble Truth of Suffering." Suffering there is. The Second Noble Truth? (Student: "The cause of suffering is attachment.") Yes, look at the cause of suffering, what do we see? The Tibetan adage is: "The near enemy of love is attachment." For example, we want those nearest to us not to change, because we like them as they have been, but not as they are becoming.... When we have attachment to how we are, or others are, we get caught by the idea of a fixed self in an unchanging world. What an illusion!

The Second Noble Truth is about examining our ignorance of impermanence. We think, "Oh, I want that." Then, it's moving on, before we even know it, it's gone.

We think, "Oh, I can't stand that! I don't want that. I'm going to do everything I can to keep it away from me," forgetting that it's moving on, too!... What is really happening here? What are we doing to perpetuate our suffering?

...Remember what the Buddha said on being enlightened, "This ego structure is no more!" So, the Third Noble Truth, often translated as "Cessation of suffering," could read "Sit down and shut up, turn, and continue turning to really see things as they are." We must have eyes that see, ears that listen.

The Fourth Noble Truth is, of course, our wonderful path. It's not some abstraction, but is right here in front of us, under our rear ends when we're sitting, under our feet when we're walking. At last see this True Self, unblinded by vain hopes of things being different from the way they are. So often we are caught by: "I don't like it! I don't like the way I feel right now! I want it to be different." But if we are unblinded, we see at last, "As it is. Just this!"

Setcho's verse, "Holding the jewel, merit is rewarded." About this merit, of course, Bodhidharma had something to say to Emperor Wu. Emperor Wu was so proud of himself, "Oh, I've done all this great stuff for Buddhism, established monasteries, sponsored translations, etc., what merit have I attained?" "No merit whatsoever!" says Bodhidharma.

In the Diamond Sutra, it says: "A Bodhisattva who practices charity with mind attached to notions of form, ('What am I gonna get out of this? How will this action benefit my practice? If I chant the Diamond Sutra, will I get more money?') is like one groping sightless in the dark. But a Bodhisattva who practices charity with mind detached from form is like one with open eyes in the radiant glory of the morning to whom all kinds of objects are clearly visible."

Setcho's verse: "Free from merit, the jewel reflects no more." How can it reflect? It is everything! Nothing separate. "Truly meritless, the heavens seek in vain." Nothing to be sought. Shakyamuni Buddha, do you know the secret? Is

there a secret in this practice? That, if somebody tells us the right koan, we'll finally get it? Is there a secret? "Everything lies open," says Setcho. Robert Blythe said, "It's an open secret." Eyes that see, ears that listen and an understanding heart. This I wish for you!

With gassho,
Roko

What to bring to Rohatsu:

Please bring a zabaton and zafu if you have them. Bring clothes for cold, wet weather (layers are best), and sturdy shoes for outdoor kinhin (walking meditation). Bring a sleeping bag, pillow, towel, washcloth and flashlight. Eating bowls and utensils will be provided (bring traditional nested bowls if you have them).

Food and Accommodations:

We serve three vegetarian meals, one large tea and two small teas per day. Leftovers may be available for snacking at the cook's discretion. Hot coffee and tea will be available most of the time. If you want food to munch on, please plan to bring or buy your own. The kitchen and provisions in Totem Lodge are reserved for the planned meals. There is a kitchen in Chak Chak when participants may prepare their own beverages and snacks. Totem Lodge has the large meeting room that we use for the zendo and meals, the main kitchen, and two dormitory wings (male & female) with bathrooms. There are semi-private rooms in Chak Chak about 50 yards from zendo.

Schedule:

Sesshin begins with a wake-up bell shortly after 4:00 am. Breakfast is at 7:30 am, lunch at 11:30 am, and dinner at 6:00 pm. There are 30 min. breaks after each meal. We will have personal interview time with Osho-san three times a day, and two or more periods of walking meditation. Group zazen will adjourn at about 10:00 pm, with time after that for personal sitting practice (yaza).

Hekiganroku: Case 42

“Beautiful Snowflakes”

(Fifth day Autumn Sesshin)

ENGO'S INTRODUCTION

He talks independently, acts independently and he trudges through the mire for the sake of others. He talks with others, acts with others and he stands alone, like silver mountains and iron cliffs. If you doubt and hesitate, you will be a ghost haunting a skull. If you stop to think, you will fall into hell. Don't you see the bright sun shining in the sky and feel the cool breeze blowing across the face of the earth? Was any of the great ones of ancient times like this? See the following.

MAIN SUBJECT

Ho Koji was leaving Master Yakusan. Master Yakusan let ten zenkaku [Zen students] escort him to the temple gate to bid him farewell. Koji pointed to the falling snowflakes and said, “Beautiful snowflakes, one by one, but they fall nowhere else.” Then, one of the Zen students named Zen said, “Where do they fall?” Koji gave him a slap. Zen then said, “Koji, you shouldn't be so abrupt!” Koji said, “If you are like *that* and call yourself a Zen student, Emma [the Lord of Hell] will never let you go.” Zen said, “What about yourself?” Koji gave him another slap and said, “You look but you are like a blind man. You speak but you are like a deaf mute.” Setcho adds a comment here: “Why didn't you hit him with a snowball in the first place?”

SETCHO'S VERSE

Hit him with a snowball
hit him with a ball.
Even the best will fail to reply.
Heaven nor earth knows not what to do.
Eyes and ears are blocked with snow,
Transcendent serenity and purity.
Even the blue-eyed old monk can't
explain.

A number of our Dedications close with the line: “May Dai Bai Zan Cho Bo Zen Temple become complete.” What does this mean? It implies a number of things, I think it is a kind of prayer/promise for

all who train at this temple to become mature in the Way. It is a prayer/ promise that all who come and train here might find clarity and manifest compassion. And Barbara (Jodo) came up with another idea, those who train here are helping the planet mature, and, so, to become complete is to embrace and awaken everyone.

“To embrace and awaken everyone...” this is one way to translate our Bodhisattva vow “Shu Jo Mu Hen Sai Gan Do.” “The number of beings is innumerable. I vow to care for, or awaken, them all.” How can we do that? There are so many beings and we are so few. We feel, rightly, small, like one grain of sand on a vast beach, if *that* much! How will we care for and awaken all beings on all the planets in the universe?

If we open our eyes and truly see things just as they are, beyond attachment to our personal identity, beyond this little lifetime, we see our own death and that of everyone else quickly approaching. We see that nothing is going to save us from the certainty that this body, this individuality, and this world are impermanent, temporary. This realization forces us, or inspires us, to seek a broader or wider view. If we fail to take a longer or deeper view, we remain stuck in our individuality, with this limited physical body, just trying to save ourselves or those who are closest to us. However, nearly everyone realizes the futility of this effort, and we either get depressed, anxious, fearful or confused. What's it all for? There's nothing I can do to prevent growing old, sick and dying.

At Sesshin, with our strong intention to see what is, we have this opportunity to take the long view or see the Big Picture. To break through to Just This (motioning around the room), we must break past wanting the bell to ring, past “I'd rather be in Hawaii,” past “I'd rather I didn't hurt,” past all of our wants and desires that would make it “good” rather than “bad” for us. When we are attached to being someplace that we are not, which we often are, we are in a hell of our own making. When we're attached to not being in pain or we're attached to the bell ringing, we amplify our discomfort or disquiet exponentially. Even being attached to the idea of enlightenment or awakening is to go astray. Any time

we're trying to be someplace or something we are not, we create our own hell realm.

Instead, we have the opportunity to learn, and it's not easy, but it is simple, how to be right here, right now and not someplace else. So, if I'm fatigued, rather than hating the fatigue, being mad because I can't stay more awake and wishing it were another time of day, I try to accept tired as tired. If I'm having trouble accepting, then when the Kaisaku passes, I bow. If the Kaisaku is *not* coming by, then just this effort, to be here now, in the midst of fatigue or pain is all that is necessary. We make every effort to simply be here with what is. If we are successful in being here, we get to be everywhere, because there's no place that isn't here, there's no time that isn't THIS time.

It's an amazing paradox. If we really succeed at studying self, or turning inward towards or around “Who I am?” then “I” becomes all of humanity; in fact, we realize that we are seamlessly connected to all beings everywhere. It's when I want to be someone or somewhere else that I feel separate, isolated, anxious and depressed. Relax! In the midst of fatigue, pain, fantasy, or the constant construction noise just sit and breathe into where we are now.

We fall into hell so easily by wanting something or trying to be something we are not. Enlightenment is not out there, or in a treasure at the bottom of an ocean. It is not around the corner, or someplace that I have to get to. It is not something that I have to discover nor something that I have to complete or construct. No, as the Song of Zazen so correctly says, “Whether going or returning, we cannot be anyplace else” and also, “We seek it far away, What a pity!” What a pity that we seek it outside of ourselves. That we think we need to achieve something or get somewhere. I need to get to the future or I need to get to the past because I don't like where I am now. “We are like a person who, in the midst of water, cries out in thirst so imploringly.” Recently I heard Jiro Osho (Vice Abbot of DaiBosatsu Monastery, and like Roko Ni-Osho, a Dharma Heir to Eido Roshi) say in a Teisho, “A Zen teacher tries to sell you fresh water while you're swimming in a fresh water lake.”

Ho Koji (Ho was his family name, Koji was a title of respect for a lay Zen student) trained for 17 years under this teacher Yakusan. Before he began studying with Yakusan, he studied with Sekito and then with Baso. Departing Yakusan after so many years, he was escorted by ten monks to the temple gate. Ho Koji pointed to the snowflakes and said, "Beautiful snowflakes, one by one, they fall nowhere else!" Aren't we each one of us like a snowflake, totally unique; never is a snowflake exactly the same, but all are made up of water. Sunyata [emptiness] manifesting as myriad different forms. Nice metaphor! Not a metaphor, truth! And they fall nowhere else. Snowflakes are so temporary, just like us.

Then one of the Zen monks said, initiating some kind of dharma battle, "Where do they fall?" As in, "Where is this?" and "Where do you think you are?" "Is there someplace else to be?" perhaps he could have said. Setcho adds his comment to the monk, "Why didn't you just throw a snowball in his face?"

Ho Koji came up with this verse that communicates so much in a very simple sentence, a wonderful metaphor that is the truth of our very existence and doesn't labor about Dharma or Buddha. Like a Haiku, Ho Koji's verse reveals so much. "Beautiful snowflakes, one by one, but they fall nowhere else." I wish I could be so eloquent, simple, direct and clear. Even so, Setcho implores us that we can be even more direct, "Why didn't you just throw a snowball in his face?" Where are you? In the snow? (Throwing sound) Let's have some fun! And let's shout, "This is It!" Even Ho Koji's verse is once removed from snow in your face.

And what would you do with that? Do you think Ho Koji would get mad: "What are you doing that for? Don't you have any respect for me? I trained 17 years with our teacher! How dare you throw a snowball in my face!" Do you think that would be his reaction? I don't think so. Like all of you, I think he would laugh and throw a snowball back.

We're all unique, we're all temporary, we're made of the same stuff. Ok, let's have a snowball fight! Let's play with it rather than be depressed about it. Really

nothing depressing about it anyway. The Heart Sutra says, "No life and death and no end to life and death." See things as they really are and there can only be gratitude. Why waste time desiring to be someplace else or someone else. Life is short. Life is short, and there is no end to life and death.

Koji did the only thing he could do. Where are we? (Smack) Well, I think we're right here! (Smack) The monk said, "You shouldn't be so abrupt. Why did you hit me?" Ah, come on, says Koji, If you're like that, how can you call yourself a student of Zen? Your own hell realm will never let you go. Wake up! Come on! We are students of Zen. Don't get caught in a hell realm of your own making.

Well, what about yourself?" says the monk, still trying. Koji responds, "You look but you are like a blind man. You speak but you are like a deaf mute," and he's saying, You see but you don't really see. You hear but you don't really hear. He's also talking about what it's like to be a Zen teacher; we try to speak, but we don't really have anything to say. And Setcho's comment to the monk was just it entirely, "Why didn't you throw a snowball in his face!"

Katsuki Sekida who put together this translation of the Hekiganroku comments, "Hitting with a snowball makes the whole universe appear as pure and clean as snow, bringing about the oneness of heaven and earth." This misses the point! And Sekida continues, "But this does not mean that Ho Koji should have been spattered with snow!" [laughter] Of course he should have hit him with a snowball, and there is no meaning! Why be caught in hell realms of our own making?

Even Setcho says in his verse, "Hit him with a snowball!" Hit him with a snowball! No response but dharma laughter is possible. Complete defeat and complete success at once. Such a perfect opportunity! Neither heaven nor earth will know what to do. Eyes and ears will be blocked with snow. No more philosophical explanation, just direct delight.

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Schedule

Introduction to Zen

Tuesdays, 7:30-8:30 pm

Zazen

Monday - Friday, 5:30 am, 1 hr.

Thursdays, 7:30 pm, 1 hr.

Saturdays, 6:30 - 8:00 am

Sundays, 6:30 pm, 1 hr.

Dharma Talks

1st and 3rd Sundays, 7:30 pm, 1 hr.

Sesshins: Quarterly week-long retreats last week in March, June, September and the first week of December.

Mini-Sesshins: Half day retreats with breakfast, Dharma Talk and Dharma Interview. 5 - 11:20 am, Sundays: 11/24/02, 1/11/03, 2/9/03, 3/9/03

Rohatsu Sesshin: 12/1/02 - 12/9/02

Spring Sesshin: 3/22/03 - 3/28/03

Summer Sesshin: 6/21/03 - 6/27/03

Autumn Sesshin: 9/21/03 - 9/27/03.

We Are Located: at 1811 20th Ave., (one half-block north of Madison and south of Denny). Street parking is available in front or between 19th and 20th on Denny, or off-street parking is available behind the house. After entering the front door, remove your shoes and socks in the entry way and proceed to the Zendo (meditation hall) upstairs. [206-328-3944](tel:206-328-3944)

Dues and Fees: go to support the life of this temple. We have no outside support from any organization.

Dues are \$60 a month or whatever one can afford. Any amount received monthly means that you will receive this quarterly newsletter, receive discounts on retreats, and be considered an active member.

The suggested fee for any morning or evening practice period, including Tuesday night introduction and Sunday night Dharma Talk is five dollars. The \$5 fee is waived for all members.

The suggested fee for mini-sesshins is \$20. Fees for the March, July, and September sesshins are \$210, and Rohatsu Sesshin is \$310. Members may subtract their monthly dues from the week-long sesshin cost. **See: www.choboji.org**

This case, brought to mind a couple of paragraphs from the book Dandelion Wine by Ray Bradbury. I'll read a bit to close, I think you will appreciate the connection. Remember, a rose is a rose by any other name, "awakening" is not limited to the cushion. Douglas and his ten-year-old brother Tom are being driven out of town by their father to pick berries...

[Their father explained:] *And, some days... were the days of hearing every thump and trill of the universe. Some days were for tasting and some for touching. And some days were good for all the senses at once... Momentarily, a stranger might laugh off in the woods but there was silence... Douglas shivered, this was a special day. The car stopped at the very center of a quiet forest and Dad said, "All right, boys, behave!" "Yes sir."... Yes, something's going to happen, he thought, I know it!...*

[Picking berries, the boys hear "Lunchtime!"] *With buckets half burdened with fox grapes and wild strawberries followed by bees which were no more and no less, said Father, the world humming under its breath, they sat on a green-moss log, chewing sandwiches and trying to listen to the forest the same way Father did. ...lunch was over and they moved again into the shadows to find fox grapes and the tiny wild strawberries, bent down all three of them, hands coming and going, the pails getting heavy and Douglas holding his breath thinking, Yes, yes, it's near again! Breathing on my neck, almost! Don't look. Work. Just fill up the pail. If you look, you'll scare it off. Don't lose it this time! But how, how do you bring it around where you can see it, stare right in the eye. How? How?*

"Got a snowflake in the matchbox," said Tom, smiling in the wine-glove on his hand. Shut up! Douglas wanted to yell. But no, the yell would scare the echoes and run the Thing away. And, wait... the more Tom talked, the closer the Great Thing came, it wasn't scared off of Tom, Tom drew it with his breath, Tom was a part of it. "Last February," said Tom, and chuckled. "Held up a matchbox in a snowstorm, let one old snowflake fall in, shut it up, ran inside the house, stashed it in the icebox!" Close, very close, Douglas stared at Tom's flickering lips. He wanted to jump around, for he felt a vast tidal wave lift up behind the forest. In an instant, it would smash down and crush them forever... "Yes, sir," mused Tom, picking grapes, "I'm the only guy all of Illinois who's got a snowflake in the summer. Precious as diamonds, by gosh. Tomorrow I'll open it. Doug, you can look, too..."

Any other day Douglas would have snorted, struck out, denied it all. But now, with the Great Thing rushing near, falling down in the clear air above him, he could only nod, his eyes shut. Tom, puzzled, stop picking berries and turned to stare over at his brother. Douglas, hunched over, was an ideal target. Tom leaped, yelling, and landed. They fell, thrashed, and rolled. No! Douglas squeezed his mind shut. No! But, suddenly... Yes, it's all right! Yes! The tangle, the contact of the bodies, the falling tumble had not scared off the tidal sea that crushed now, flooding and washing them along the shore of grass, deep through the forest. Knuckles struck his mouth. He tasted rusty, warm blood, grabbed Tom hard, held him tight, and so in silence, they lay, hearts churning, nostrils hissing. And, at last, slowly, afraid he would find nothing, Douglas opened one eye. And everything, absolutely everything, was there. The world, like a great iris of an even more gigantic eye which has also just opened and stretched out to encompass everything, stared back at him. And he knew what it was that had leaped upon him. It would stay and would not run away now. "I'm alive," he thought.

It's all alive. With gassho, Genjo



Dai Bai Zan Cho Bo Zen Ji

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Seattle, WA 98122