



Plum Mountain News

Dear members and friends,

We have been having warmer and drier days as spring gives us hints of summer in the Pacific Northwest. So much has happened in one quarter, I find it both exhausting and exhilarating. Early in March I traveled to San Diego to do my



annual sesshin with southern California Aikido students. There were fifteen people in attendance. Sesshin was hosted in the home of Coryl Crane Sensei of Solana Beach, and organized by Steve (Shinkai) Garber Sensei and Leslie Cohen who have both come to many sesshins in Seattle. I am delighted to



report that at the end of the San Diego Sesshin, Leslie did Jukai (Precept Ceremony) and received the name of SenKo (Thousand points of Light). If a

reader is interested in doing Jukai, you will need to write a letter to me saying why you think the time is right, after doing at least two weeklong sesshins.

Seattle's Spring Sesshin, March 20 - 26, had twenty people in attendance. Tom (Shodo) DeGroot was our very capable Shika (Host/Manager) and organized not only the work at Chobo-Ji but got many of us working on improving the apartments at the new South Horton St. location. Michael (Mukan) Blome has become an excellent Tenzo (Chief Cook) and was assisted by Carolyn (Josen) Stevens and others. Dee (Seishun) Endelman was our ever-ready finely tuned Jikijitsu (Timekeeper). Sally (Zenka) Metcalf worked hard to pace us through the sutras as our Densu (Chant Leader). Bob (Daigan) Timmer and Charlie (Taishin)

Blackman kept us delightfully sated with tea and treats as our Jisha (Tea Servers). Scott (Ishin) Stolnack served me well as my Inji (Abbot Assistant). I am very thankful to Rev. Genko Blackman for giving a moving Dharma Talk on second day on "Sun Faced and Moon Faced Buddha."

Our Spring Intensive got off to a good start with a mini-sesshin (half-day intensive) March 14, which was also the day of our Annual Meeting where we elected the Board for this year, more on this later in this issue. We also began our weekly "Zen Reading" that evening, investigating selected quotes from the Dhammapada, along with an informal Dharma Talk given after every Sunday evening meditation inspired by the quoted verse. Our Spring Intensive Book Study group is also investigating the Dhammapada. Our sutra practice for the Spring Intensive is focusing on Ryogon Shu chanting. On

Saturday, April 10th, about a dozen Chobo-Ji followers got a private tour of the Asian Art Museum, and on Sunday, April 25th Genko Ni-Osho was the host of a tea demonstration at the Japanese Garden Tea House.

The first weekend in April, I went to sit with the Walla Walla Dharma Sangha and the Whitman College Namasté Meditation Club. It was great to sit with old friends and meet new ones. At the end of April John (Daikan) Green and I traveled to Dai Bosatsu Zendo



(DBZ) in the Catskill Mountains of New York for the Nyogen Senzaki Memorial Sesshin. We returned to Seattle on May 10th. While at DBZ, we found all of Chobo-Ji's former students now training there in good health and spirits. Rev. Shinkon Glynn has completed his 1000-day unsui training commitment. It has been wonderful to watch the unfolding of a deep maturity in his practice. He will be returning soon to his home in California with his partner and Dharma Protector Cecilie Hoffman. I look forward to his brightened spirit when he one day returns to sesshin in Seattle. Rev. Jodo Tina Grant and Rev. Zenmu Brenda Nightingale continue to grow and mature in the Way. Rev. Zuiho Matthew Perez informed me of some very interesting news: he will be suspending unsui training at DBZ to get married! I told him that being married should not ultimately interfere with his unsui training, and that it can enhance the necessity for well-rounded maturity. Those of you who know him well can read his wedding invitation posted in the Zendo kitchen. Eido

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Shimano Roshi was in good form, but he and about a third of sesshin participants caught a cold, which slowed things down a bit. Rev. Fujin, the head monk, served as Jikijitsu for this sesshin and made sure we all gave our best. She is an amazing gift to the Dharma.

As for my own practice at DBZ, sesshin was deep; however, towards the end I did come down with the cold that was going around, and I'm still working to recover my health fully. It is customary at DBZ to chant the Diamond Sutra in the afternoon, and the following verse was inspired from my most recent immersion in this seminal Sutra:

*This vast expanding universe,
barely a lotus blossom,
The myriad shapes and personalities,
origami of Emptiness,
Deep questions can be formulated,
the real truth cannot.*



*Even so... stop and sit
by the burbling brook.
Listen to the trees
on a still moonlit morning.
And then... share a cup of tea.*

Recently I was off to Canada to teach the Buddhist approach to spiritual inquiry to the Pacific Jubilee Program at the Naramata Centre in Penticton, BC. This is the same program in Spiritual Direction I graduated from in 1989. On Memorial Day weekend Genko and I will be going to Montana to visit with our founding abbot Genki Takabayashi Roshi. He has expressed an interest in being in Seattle with all of us through the transition to our new space, in spite of his current frailty. Hopefully many Sangha members will have the opportunity to be with – and care for – him in the coming months.

Speaking of our expansion and transition to North Beacon Hill, change of use plans

have now been officially submitted to the Department of Planning and Development, and we hope to begin construction several months from now. In the meantime, half the windows have been replaced, estimates have been gathered to replace the furnace this summer, as of June 1st, one senior Chobo-Ji student will be living on the property and my office will be there. Read more about the expansion later in this issue.

In other Sangha news, Virginia (Myoshin) Dunthorne, moved to La Conner, and Barbara (Jodo) Bullock who recently moved to Bellingham will be going to Australia to live with her daughter. I am sure both would love a visit, if you are passing their way. On another note, we are looking for a new main altar cloth, if you have something you think would work or see something that inspires you, please let me know.

In addition to what I have already mentioned, you will find a transcription of the Teisho from the third day of Spring Sesshin, “Zuigan Calls Master,” a book report on “A Man of Zen” about Layman P’ang Yün, and, of course, Genko Ni-Osho’s “Thoughts on Practice.” Please be sure to note the announcements for our upcoming Summer Sesshin. I will be traveling to Ellensburg for a half-day sesshin June 5th and I will be off to the American Zen Teachers Association meeting in Rochester, NY, July 14 – 18. May the remainder of your spring be bountiful.

With gassho,

Genjo

Annual Meeting Report

Chobo-Ji’s 2010 annual meeting was held immediately after the mini-sesshin March 14. The members’ meeting was held first, in order to elect the board for the coming year. There was no change from last year in the make-up of the board: Daiki Cadman, Shodo Tom deGroot, Seishun Dee Endelman, JoAn Diane Ste. Marie, Josen Carolyn Stevens, Isshin Scott Stolnack,

Daigan Bob Timmer, Genko Blackman, and Genjo Marinello (ex officio).

The board’s annual meeting followed, with the following chosen as officers for the coming year: Genko Blackman President, Daigan Bob Timmer Vice President, JoAn Diane Ste. Marie Secretary, and Josen Carolyn Stevens Treasurer.

Following election of officers, the bulk of the meeting was spent hearing reports and organizing committees and task groups to handle the work of managing the new building and remodel for the zendo. Elsewhere in this newsletter you will see the first report on the work so far.

Thoughts on Practice

by Genko Ni-Osho

Elsewhere in this issue of Plum Mountain News you will read about the many activities leading up to a move, hopefully within a year or so, to our new, larger zendo and the possibility of a residential practice as well. While right now our energy is necessarily focused on the physical building itself, ultimately the shape and quality of our Sangha’s practice, both residential and non-residential, is the most important aspect.

In order to explore more deeply the unique qualities a residential practice can offer us, I’ve been reading about a number of different monastic systems, both Buddhist and Christian, and also ways in which monastic rule can be adapted to lay residential life. There is enough material for a lifetime of study, but most importantly for us some clear similarities among these different systems emerge.

1. A broader perspective. Fundamentally, monastic life is designed to support the efforts of a community of people who have a broader perspective on life than the individual self. This life requires complete sincerity to make it work. Hyakujo says to put your whole self into it. Without this

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attitude, it is impossible to make a monastic community work well.

2. Ethical behavior. While they vary greatly in the details, every single monastic system has a clear set of moral guidelines, and consequences for failure to follow them. There is a universal recognition that human beings living together need a common understanding of acceptable behavior.

3. No idle time, no mundane concerns. Most monastic systems have a schedule that does not allow for what we call leisure time, or break time. Every hour of the day is spoken for by liturgical or contemplative practice, study, sleep, eating, and otherwise meeting survival needs, including work in some systems, but not all.

4. Contemplative practice. From hours of zazen or other forms of meditation to contemplative study of sacred texts, every monastic system provides for some form of contemplative practice.

5. Silence, no idle chatter. From the extreme of no spoken words at all to words spoken only when essential, there is an acknowledgment that speaking can create problems more easily than it can solve them.

6. Humility and obedience. Most monastic systems ask that community members adhere strictly to the rules, in humility and with complete obedience. This obedience is not blind, however. Shunryu Suzuki Roshi tells us we don't practice the precepts or rituals for their own sake, but to express our true nature. In all the monastic systems, there is an underlying assumption that direction in the monastery will be wise, and feedback mechanisms from the community are provided for.

7. Shared information, openness in all respects. This is just wise organizational dynamics – open sharing of needed information prevents divisions in the group. In both Buddhist and Christian monastic settings, this principle is followed also in regards to open sharing of what might be called faults, or occasions when an individual finds him or herself falling short of expectations. Monastics are encouraged to let the group know when they transgress, no matter how small the transgression may

seem. To hide this information is to build up pride, or a false sense of self. However, the Benedictine Rule makes the distinction that, if a fault stems from “an issue that lies deep within the conscience,” that is, something from a deep psychological vulnerability, then the fault should be shared initially only with a trusted teacher or senior student.

Likewise, if a teacher or senior student needs to point something out to someone by way of correction or instruction, there is a common understanding that this needs to be done with great care. Shunryu Suzuki Roshi lists guidelines from one of the sutras: such instruction should be given in private, in a low voice that conveys a gentle and calm attitude; it should be given to help the student, not to get something off one's chest or put the student down (in fact, he says the teacher should ignore the fault if the student is not serious); it should be done with compassion, as a trusted friend; it should be clear that the transgression is seen by the teacher not as “wrong” or a “mistake,” but as a simple fact, or truth.

8. Communal basis of practice. All monastic systems are established on the understanding that communal practice is absolutely essential to loosen attachment to our own personal sense of identity and importance. The Benedictine Rule distinguishes among four kinds of monks – cenobites, or monastics living within the rule; anchorites, or hermits who practiced for many years in a monastic setting and are now able to practice in a solitary fashion; sarabaites, who may live in a monastic setting, but do not adhere to a rule; and gyrovagues, or wanderers, who “never settle down and are slaves to their own wills and gross appetites.” It acknowledges what we have been reading in the Dhammapada – this type of practice is very hard work, and we need all the support, guidance, and feedback we can get from fellow practitioners.

Most of us in the Sangha will not be living at the new zendo as part of the residential community, however, we will all benefit from a careful consideration of the structure and texture of our residential practice, learning what we can from those who have gone before us in many times and places.

Texts consulted: Buddhist Monastic Life according to the texts of the Theravadan

tradition, by Mohan Wijayaratna; Five Mountains: The Rinzaï Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan, by Martin Collcutt; Dogen's Pure Standards for the Zen Community: A translation of the Eihei Shingi by Taigen Daniel Leighton and Shohaku Okumura; The Rule of St. Benedict in English, edited by Timothy Fry; Finding Sanctuary: Monastic Steps for Everyday Life, by Christopher Jamison; Not Always So, by Shunryu Suzuki.

Residential Practice Center Update

Compiled by Dee (Seishun) Endelman

As things move ahead with our new building on Beacon Hill in Seattle, the Chobo-Ji Board plans to keep all Sangha members and friends “in the loop” through a monthly update. This update will be sent once each month, beginning in June, to all on our e-mail list.

Following is our first report.

Committees

The Board has established several committees and task groups to divide up the work associated with planning and implementation of our new residential practice center. Following are the committees/task groups that have been established thus far:

- Finance Committee: This Committee is charged with revising financial policies to reflect Chobo-Ji's greater complexity as we grow. Its members are: Josen Carolyn Stevens (Chair); Daikan John Green; and Ishin Scott Stolnack. Also, Daigan Bob Timmer is assisting Josen with bookkeeping for the new building.
- Design and Construction Committee: This committee is charged with overseeing design and construction of the new Zendo. Its members are: Ishin Scott Stolnack (Chair); Genjo Osho; Shodo Tom DeGroot; JoAn Diane

St. Marie (note-taker); Daizan Michael Lyons, Mike Lanning, an architectural designer and Wenatchee Sangha member. In addition, Steven Paget, who has considerable experience with building projects, is advising the committee.

- Maintenance Task Group: This group is charged with coordinating maintenance issues of the new building. Its members are Daiki Ed Cadman and Daizan Michael Lyons.



greatest concern expressed was whether we would continue to allow pets in the building. Genjo Osho assured the tenants that Chobo-Ji loves pets!

On April 26, Genjo and several Board members hosted an open house for Beacon Hill Community members at the Beacon Hill Library. Genjo had personally visited many residents to introduce himself and give them written information on this meeting. Only a few neighbors attended—which

Committee is reviewing qualifications of four contractors referred to us and will select one to work with us through the summer pre-construction phase of the project. We are currently in the midst of the permitting process with the city. The Committee hopes that, between June and September, the architect will work with the committee and contractor to complete 80% design of the new Zendo. If all goes well, the new Zendo should be ready for Summer Sesshin 2011!

- Maintenance and Rentals: As we planned to do when we purchased the building, we have replaced all of the windows on the south and west side. Three apartments have also been vacated. Daiki Cadman is pleased to announce that he will move into one of them on June 1. Genjo has taken a second for his psychotherapy office. We are holding the last one in reserve for a month to make improvements and examine the possibility of housing Genki Roshi.

So, as you can see, there is much afoot! If you have interests or skills to share in helping with any of these matters or if you have questions about the residential practice center, please contact one of the Committee Chairs, Genjo or Genko. There will be a variety of tasks over the coming year or so and we want to involve as many Sangha members as are interested.

- Rental Agreements Task Group: This group is developing a rental policy and is responsible for matters related to renting vacant apartments. Its members are Josen, Daigan and Shodo.
- Communications Committee: This committee is charged with facilitating communications among committees and with the community, Sangha and friends of Chobo-Ji. Its members are: Genko Ni-Osho and Seishun Dee Endelman.

we take as a sign that our arrival is not raising concerns—and those who came were uniformly enthusiastic that Chobo-Ji is coming to the neighborhood.

- Residential Program: Genjo and Genko have met informally to begin discussing residential practice matters (application for residency and guidelines for residents). They will focus on completing this work more substantively once we are further along in the permitting and design process.
- Permitting and Design: The Design and Construction Committee has been hard at work on the design for the new Zendo. Preliminary CAD drawings were completed thanks to Judy Green, Daikan's partner, and we have since begun working with an architect, Debrah Walker. The

Summer Sesshin

June 26th - July 2nd

Please send a deposit by June 6th, earlier if you want to guarantee a reserved spot. Make your deposit check to Chobo-Ji. The cost of sesshin is \$210 (less dues). There will be optional zazen, Friday, 6/25, 7:30 - 8:30 PM. Sesshin formally begins promptly at 5 AM the morning of Saturday, June 26th, so plan to be there at least 20 min. early. Sesshin will end around 11 AM, Friday morning.

Recent Activities

- Community Outreach: Genjo Osho and Genko Ni-Osho met with current tenants on April 19 to address any concerns they might have. This meeting went well; the

The Recorded Sayings of Layman P'Ang

Review by Sally (Zenka) Metcalf

*The Layman was once lying on his couch reading a sutra. A monk saw him and said: "Layman! You must maintain dignity when reading a sutra."
The Layman raised up one leg.
The Monk had nothing to say.*

For a remarkable collection of anecdotes in the form of delightful dharma scuffles, and selected verses by the eighth-century Chinese Buddhist layperson P'ang Yün try reading [A Man of Zen: The Recorded Sayings of Layman P'ang](#). The book is yet another jewel produced by Ruth Fuller Sasaki and colleagues.

For centuries the Layman was something of a Chinese folk hero—known especially for the day he loaded his possessions into a boat and sank all in the river. He apparently regarded wealth as an impediment to enlightenment. Content without, from that day on, he and his daughter eked out an existence making and selling bamboo implements.

I wonder if the Layman gave his sunken treasure a second thought, as he left the river bank and traveled to meet the great Zen Master Shih-t'ou (Sekitō) where he was at once enlightened. From there he went on to Ma-tsu (Baso) and deepened his enlightenment with the second of the two greatest Zen Masters of their time.

Not only was the Layman enlightened, but his whole family...

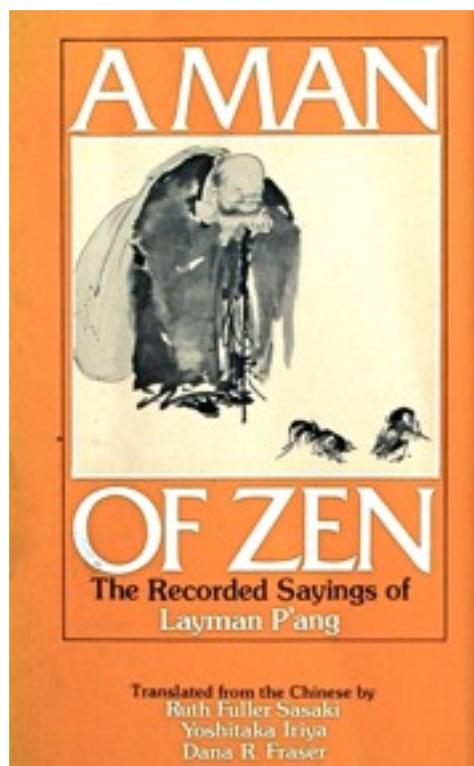
"Difficult!" exclaimed the Layman—"like scattering ten measures of sesame seed all over a tree!"

"Easy! returned Mrs. P'ang, "just like touching your feet to the ground when you get out of bed."

"Neither difficult nor easy," said their daughter Ling-chao. "On the hundred grass-tips, the Patriarchs' meaning."

How easy it seemed for Layman P'ang to part with wealth. We were talking of non-attachment the other day in the Chobo-Ji book group. Easy to discuss, but difficult to loosen our grip. As always, my readings make me reflect on my life.

On Ash Wednesday, 1987, my house burned down and nearly all my worldly goods with it, my best friend's, too. I went for groceries, then picked up my housemate at the ferry. We drove home in the dark and rain to find firemen putting out the last licks of flame. Sodden masses of ruined possessions lay heaped amid shattered



window glass on the lawn outside. Numbed by the shock of sudden homelessness and grief, we were taken in by a friend. Our proverbial boat had sunk. But not by choice.

Sitting alone in my friend's guest room late that night, I remember saying a curious thing to no one in particular. "I will go through whatever unfolds now, but on one condition—that this fire becomes a miracle for everyone it touches."

The next morning four 30-gallon black garbage bags of clothing had appeared on the porch. We sorted through them, taking

what fit. Day after day more followed. At first we felt responsible for all the things we received, as if we had to keep them simply because they were given. But there was far too much. So we took it to Helpline. Friends threw a Fire Shower for us. At work, the Sunday tip jar went to us. Anonymous checks arrived.

Every week we delivered at least half a dozen bags to Helpline where workers cheered our arrival. A disaster in Africa prompted a worldwide call for clothing. Responding to our loss, the community, inadvertently, cleared the closets of Bainbridge Island on behalf of hundreds of thousands of displaced people on the other side of the world. We felt like a million bucks! How ironic to lose everything and yet have so much to give.

As for my things: My collection of art books turned to ash, all my music lost, my hand-knit sweaters, my grandmother's brass tea pot melted into a metallic pool. I ached for my treasures and heirlooms, and my cozy little cottage. One night I gathered typing paper and colored markers, tore the paper into small notes and drew pictures of these treasures or wrote their names on the notes. Next came fashioning a little white boat, complete with sail, out of the same paper. In went all the memorabilia along with a few blank notes for possessions I'd undoubtedly remember later. My housemate joined me, adding her own.

At the burned-out house late that evening, we picked cherry blossoms and a bit of cedar for the boat, then walked to a nearby dock on Hidden Cove. With lighter fluid generously poured into the boat, and a hopeful match poised for use, we set the boat on black water, smooth as glass. Not a breath of wind ruffled the surface.

I thought the typing paper would soak through at once and the craft sink. Instead it floated! We tossed the match in and the flames shot up. The little boat took off and sailed thirty feet out into the harbor, then tacked back and forth in front of us for half an hour, hovering over a perfect reflection of its fiery self, flames dancing. We stood dockside, my best friend and I, weeping in each other's arms. Astonished.

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The Mumonkan

Case 12 – Zuigan Calls Master 3rd Day, Spring Sesshin

Since that night, when I recall a treasure ruined in the fire, instead of hurt rising in my chest, I can say, at ease, “That’s all right. I put it in the boat.” My experience is not on a par with the Layman’s example of freedom from attachment. But for each of us, our ship of plenty set sail and sank; and we both found a measure of peace from that.

The end of the Pang family story was as remarkable as their life together. When it came time to die, the Layman prepared himself on his meditation seat and sent his daughter to watch for the midday sun. There happened to be an eclipse. Ling-chao called her father out to see it, then took his place on the seat and quietly passed away. Finding his daughter had preceded him, the Layman waited a week out of respect, then followed. Mrs. Pang, hearing of these deaths, called out the news to her son as he cultivated the garden. He nodded and promptly died in the field, standing up at his hoe. Mrs. Pang departed from that place and was never seen again.

Together they lived, so sweetly, together they died, dropping the bodily form of this life as easily as they shed their wealth.

*The wise man, perceiving wealth and lust,
Knows them to be empty illusion;*

*Food and clothes sustain body and life—
I advise you to learn being as is.*

*When it’s time, I move my hermitage and
go, And there’s nothing to be left behind.
—Layman Pang*



Koan

Every day Master Zuigan Shigen used to call out to himself, “Oh, Master!” and would answer himself “Yes?” “Are you awake?” he would ask, and would answer, “Yes, I am.” “Never be deceived by others, any day, any time.” “No, I will not.”

Mumon’s Commentary

Old Zuigan himself sells and himself buys. He has a lot of masks of goblins and demons to play with. Why? Nii! A calling one, an answering one, an awake one, and one who will not be deceived by others. If you take these different appearances as really existing, you are altogether mistaken. If, however, you would imitate Zuigan, your understanding is that of a fox.

Mumon’s Poem

*Those who search for the Way do not
realize the Truth,*

*They only know their old discriminating
consciousness.*

*This is the cause of endless cycle of birth
and death,*

*Yet ignorant people take it for the Original
Person.*

Today we begin to turn a corner in sesshin. On the third day, your body has become mostly aware of the trials and tribulations of doing sesshin. Nothing too new will surprise us now, and we begin to be able to be awake, even through the long sits and the rigor of Sesshin, Samu and chanting. We start to find our rhythm, get in the groove. And we begin to settle. Instead of railing against our pain, fatigue, fantasies or defenses, we begin to sit beneath them and, on occasion, feel quite awake, rooted and free.

This is not something that we can make happen. But, in the course of doing sesshin after sesshin, we learn how to nurture ourselves by resting attentively and deeply on the cushion. We learn, with maturity, not to be discouraged. We wait for the next passing wave of depth, clarity and openheartedness. Our patience helps till the soil of our true nature. It calms our complexity and confusion so that more clarity, equanimity and openheartedness sprout naturally.

When we experience the lucidity and peace of mind that naturally surfaces when our root nature is cared for, we call this Mastery or “encountering the Master” and this is what Zuigan is talking about and calling forth in his playful self-dialogue. He uses this “crazy” device to remember and prod his deep intention to be awake and fully present.

Zuigan is one of those masters about whom we know very little. We don’t even know the dates of his birth or death. We know that he was a student of Zen Master Ganto (828-887) who was in turn the student of Zen Master Tokusan.

By learning how to be patient with our intention to be fully present and awake to whatever arises sit after sit, encounter after encounter, we begin to experience longer periods of mental acuity, true insight and openheartedness. With continued practice to be simply awake and patient there comes a certain ease about doing any task we are engaged in. Over time a steady caring heart/mind blossoms towards all beings great and small, animate and inanimate. This openheartedness is the manifestation of Master that is being spoken of in this case. Genki Roshi, our founding abbot, painted the Japanese-Chinese kanji for “Master” on the board that is downstairs over the front bench where we take off our shoes. Therefore, every time you come into this building, you face this reminder to open up to your True Nature and recognize your Original Face.

Your True Nature and your Original Face is the Master. It's not somewhere or someone else. But we have a hard time believing that! We usually think of ourselves as anything *but* Master. We might think of ourselves as a curmudgeon, a bumpkin or a fool, and of course this is true on occasion. On the other hand, sometimes we'll have an overly inflated image of ourselves. Whether we are inflated or deflated, this has nothing to do with the Master that is being spoken of! The master we are now speaking of is completely neutral. In fact, it has no discreet personality whatsoever.

There's another calligraphy of Genki Roshi hanging over the west wall of the zendo and it says, "The True Person has No rank"—this is a saying of Zen Master Rinzai — "The True Person" are the characters on the left, the two characters on the right say "No Rank." The True Person or inner master has no rank, no position, and I would say no personality. It is the neutral pre-personality that is at the root of each one of us! The root! It's your and my Original Face and it has no face. Yet, Rinzai also says that, "the true Person is going in and out of your face all the time." As in, it's always present, but we don't always see it, we don't always feel it.

If someone looks at you while you're sleeping, you probably look blessed and innocent like an infant. We have moments of no worries or concerns, and may well look entirely peaceful. It is also true that in deep sleep we are not thinking about our rank, function, responsibilities or position of authority. When we awake, or even while in a dream, we dress this neutral True Person or Original Face with various different clothes and roles. Our personalities might include the fool, the bumpkin, the critic and the "smart one." And all of these masks we put on begin to take on a life of their own and think they know something of who we really are, forgetting that they are only our outward masks.

I've been reading two books; this first one is titled [Eloquent Silence](#) by Nyogen Senzaki, and was edited and introduced by Shinge Roshi. It is so succinct. He started every teisho by saying, "Bodhisattvas..."; he's referring to *you*, and here Nyogen Senzaki goes on to say:

Every Koan calls out to your own Master. When you meditate, for example, on the koan of The Sound of One Hand, the voice of silence is your Master. You walk with it, you sleep with it. You can neither work nor study without it. Gradually, your whole being becomes the voice of silence and you realize that there exists nothing but your true self. You may call this "master," as Zuigan did, but you can also name it the essence of mind. If you were seeking buddha, it would be called the Dharmakaya, the origin of all processes. Zuigan realized it clearly and enjoyed living in it. It was in a somewhat playful manner that he called out to it everyday, "Master" and answered himself, "Yes sir."

Nyogen Senzaki, of course, was the first Zen priest to be resident here in the United States. He arrived in Seattle in 1905, and without his efforts I don't think we would be sitting here today.

The second book is by Yamakawa Sogen Roshi, titled [Selected Teishos on Gateless Gate](#). Yamakawa Roshi is the current



Abbot of Shogen-ji in Japan and good friend of Eido Roshi. All the teishos in this book were given at Dai Bosatsu, the monastery in the Catskills that we're affiliated with. For his teisho on Master Zuigan, Yamakawa Roshi said:

This reminds me of a story. There was a disciple of Shakyamuni Buddha called Cudapanthaka. He was the stupidest person of his time. I don't know if he was the stupidest student of all Buddhists up to now. How stupid was he? He sometimes forgot his own name.

Have you ever had a day like that? Our Densu said that during one of the chants, she couldn't even see the words. She said it was a bunch of insects on the page. Anyway...

He was stupid but very serious. He went to listen to the Buddha's discourses each and every time. But he could not remember any of them. He thought he might be able to remember at least one if he could listen to it five or ten times but he couldn't!

One day, when he was weeping about his own stupidity, Buddha passed by. He said, 'Why are you crying?' Cudapanthaka answered, 'I'm too stupid to remember any of your wonderful talks.' The Buddha understood his problem through his super power, and told him, 'I see. All right, don't come to listen to my talks any more. But instead, can you clean up the place where you are standing right now, every day, for others?' and gave him a broom. Cudapanthaka answered, 'I can do that.' Buddha said, 'Well, you will have to remember just one thing. When you sweep up here, say to yourself, 'Sweep the dust, sweep the dust.' All right? It's easy to say 'sweep the dust, sweep the dust' while sweeping.' But it took such a long time for Buddha to teach this one simple thing to Cudapanthaka. I imagine (because this is no record of it) that Buddha came to see him to remind him what to say the next day and on many following days.

At last Cudapanthaka mastered it, as if breathing, 'sweep the dust, sweep the dust' while sweeping. So then, he swept every day. But what if it were raining or snowing or windy. What do you think he did? I'm sure he still swept everyday, saying 'sweep the dust, sweep the dust' every day, no matter what the weather was.

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Years passed, and one day, he suddenly got enlightened. He got enlightened even before his two very bright brothers, who were also the Buddha's disciples, did. What made him enlightened? My assumption is that he sweeps the area every day, just as we clean up our monastery building every morning. It becomes very clean and finally spotless. He goes, 'Sweep the dust, sweep the dust.' But there is no dust anymore. He has a question on his mind, 'What is dust?' 'There is no dust anymore but I have to sweep the dust. What in the world is dust then?' At that moment, he got enlightened and I suppose he cried, 'There is no dust! There is nothing!'

This is the True Master! A True Master is not some inflated image of ourselves. It is "Sweep the dust, sweep the dust" until the sweeping and the broom and the floor and the dust disappear. When there's no longer broom, sweeper, dust, room, hand, eye or mind then there is mastery. Just "sweep the dust." This "sweeping," or any activity realized through and through, happens where you've gotten down to the root of your original true nature, the true nature of the Universe. It's one and the same. The light shines serenely over the whole Universe and *this* Mind extends over the whole Universe. Sweep the dust, sweep the dust.

Every morning we chant, "Atta Dipa" and I'll tell you the story of where this verse comes from. They are nearly the last words of the Historical Buddha. Ananda, who was his chief disciple, came and wept before the Buddha just before his bodily departure and said to the Buddha, "I was afraid you might leave us so I wept. But I remembered that you left us no instructions to follow if you were gone." And the Buddha said to Ananda, "If anyone believes that my Sangha will fall

apart without my guidance (the Buddha replied drily), that person should certainly leave careful instructions. But, for my part, I know the Sangha will not fail without my guidance. Why should I therefore leave instructions? I know that you've learned this much, I'm confident that you've learned this much. Be a refuge unto yourselves. Be a lamp unto yourselves. Rely on nothing else. Hold



Spring Sesshin 2010 Participants

fast to the Dharma as your lamp. Hold fast to the Dharma as your refuge. With this intention, you will all surely reach Nirvana. Participate in the highest good as I know this is your deepest desire."

Reading a slightly more direct translation in our own Sutra Book, Page 1, why don't you get it out read and with me. "Know, you are the light itself. Rely on yourself. Do not rely on others. The Dharma is the light. Rely on the Dharma. Do not rely on anything other than the Dharma." These are the last words of the Buddha and the first words we chant every morning. (Chanting) "Atta Dipa!" Know you already are the light itself. *You* are! Just look at the tree, it's already the light itself; look at the rain, already the light itself; the flower of spring is also the light itself. Now look in the mirror, of course, already the light itself!

Rinzai said, "Going in and out of your face all the time," always there, but we don't always feel it, which is why we come up to the zendo. We come to the zendo so that in the simplicity of just sitting we might feel it a bit more often and ideally become more confident that we are the light itself. We need rely on no one else. The rocks and the trees don't

need to come to the zendo! They have no lack of confidence! The rocks and the trees are just the light itself, and can be nothing else, and have no capacity to think otherwise. But after millions and millions of eons — in other words, billions of years— "we now can see This, listen to This, accept and hold This. May we completely understand and actualize this Tathagatha's true meaning." We *can* realize that we're the light. We can see this, listen to this and manifest this Light in our daily lives. We *can* and we must! It's only

taken billions of years. But first, we have to accept that we are the Light and nothing but the Light. And that's a sticky point.

First of all, you wouldn't be in this room if you didn't think that it might be so. If you hadn't had some inkling that you are the Light, you wouldn't be attracted to it and you wouldn't come to the zendo in the first place, nor would you endure all this pain; we must all be at least this far. However, as we sit here together for long periods, lots of things come up that appear to be hindrances, such as fear of annihilation, many other ego-defenses, delusions, fantasies and distractions of many colors —that seem to inhibit the full realization that we are the Light. One way to think of these so called hindrances is that we come here to combust them and to get past them, so that we might more fully sit in and with the Light. To fully realize that everything is Light for

even just one breath is so transformative. I remember well that first breath where, as an adult, I became confident that I, along with everything else seen and unseen, was the Light. It was at summer sesshin of 1977. Many in this room have had this sort of breakthrough—in fact, most in this room—have had this sort of encounter and enjoy complete confidence that Light is real, and we are not somehow separate from the Light.

Once we fully encounter and become confident that the Light is real, somewhere along the line, sesshin after sesshin, facing our self again and again (which is what sesshin means) we become confident that, even though we don't always feel it, we too are the light through and through. This can be thought of as phase two of our development. Most people in this room are on this part of this endless journey, learning to feel with genuine intimacy, insight and confidence that we are the Light, not more or less than the rock or tree, but just as much as the rock or tree.

Phase three is becoming confident that you can rely on the Light and nothing else but the Light. And that confidence is a long time in coming. I remember a night of sesshin, in fact a dark night of the soul, in July of 2006 at Dai Bosatsu, DBZ's 40th anniversary sesshin. Coming out the other side of that dark night, something shifted. The shift matches the phrase, "There is nothing else to rely on but the Light." Nearly two years later, we had a ceremony that said, Genjo's become a Dharma Heir in the Japanese Rinzai Zen lineage. This is Eido Roshi saying, "Genjo's confident enough to "Rely on the Light, nothing but the Light." Of course whether or not you realize it, there is nothing else to rely on anyway, but after that night a scale tipped where I really believed it. Finally I really understood what this simple verse was talking about, even though I've been reading the same thing for years and years.

Now, does this mean, since the scale has tipped, that I'm still not a fool, a bumpkin, or an arrogant asshole on occasion? Look

out! (laughter) Does this mean I can't make a mess of things or I don't sometimes feel inflated or deflated? Not at all! But, on the whole, I am confident that there's nothing else to rely on but the Light. So it's okay. In balance, I *know* everything will work its way out.

I know this confidence is temporary. I may drop this body before I lose this confidence, but it may be, as with dementia or a stroke for example, that the confidence I now have can go right out the window, and that I, or any of us, can immediately go back to square one. So, I'm enjoying this while it lasts. *Everything* is temporary, even so-called enlightenment or maturity. But it's okay, it's okay. Look, here is Light. You are the Light. You are nothing but the Light. That's it! That's it!

So, old Zuigan plays with this fact. He calls out to himself everyday. "Oh, Master!" "Oh, Light!" And answers from that place, "Yes!" "Do not be deceived by others, any day, any time." "No, I will not!" Well, we wish! The others we can be deceived by are mostly all those masks we wear all the time. The mask of stupid or the mask of master or however many masks we have. Look in your closet, you have a lot of masks. Every different set of clothes is another mask. "Do not be deceived by these others, any time, any place." He states his intention, "No, I will not." I will not confuse the True Person or the Light with the mask. I will make every effort not to be confused by my own masks or the masks of others. I may not succeed, but, damn, I'm going to make every effort not to be deceived by masks! And if I do get confused by one of those masks and take it too seriously, I will make the error that mask is attempting to cover up. For example a mask of pride or self-importance is masking our arrogance. It's a process, folks. It's never completed. And all so-called advances are only temporary. But, at least, if we're in this room, we can say together, "We are followers of the Way," and while we have mental acuity we can continue to grow in maturity towards greater peace of mind and compassion for all.

Mumon's commentary says, "Don't imitate Zuigan." Well, what are you supposed to do then? As we know, imitation is, in some ways, the very best flattery. But immersing yourself is far better than imitating Zuigan. Immerse yourself in: there is Light; you are the Light; rely on the Light. If you immerse yourself in these simple truths you can't help but walk the path. Through the practice of skillful means we gain patience. And of course, we will all appreciate the openheartedness when it comes. Manifest this openheartedness in your daily life, and you will be living the life of a Bodhisattva. This is the best we can do, in fact it is all we can and need to do. Don't be a fox, and settle for a good imitation. Really do it! Experience the Light. Rely on the Light. Nothing else.

There's nothing to search for or attain! If you think there is, you're stuck in your old discriminating consciousness and this is the cause of all of your frustration and suffering.

Mumon's poem,

Those who search for the Way do not realize the Truth,

They only know their old discriminating consciousness.

This is the cause of endless cycle of birth and death,

Yet ignorant people take it for the Original Person.

Don't confuse the outward mask for the True Person. The True Person, as Rinzai says, does not rely on any mask, rank, post, position or even personality. Become confident that that neutral pre-personality or "no self" is the source of your light. Rely on this source and nothing else.

With gassho,

Genjo

Spring Sesshin 2010
Closing Incense Poem

Where have you come from?

Who is asking?

*Plum blossoms mingle
with wind and rain.*

*Bald eagle circles,
no effort, no trace.*



Chobo-Ji Schedule

Introduction to Zazen

Tuesdays, 7:30-8:30 p.m.

Zazen

Monday - Friday, 5:30 a.m., 1 hr.

Saturdays, 6:30 - 8:00 a.m.

Sundays, 6:30 p.m., 1 hr.

Monday & Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., 1 hr.

Dharma Talks

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

(most Sundays during Spring Intensive)

Sesshins: Quarterly week-long retreats
last week in March, June, September
and early January.

Mini-Sesshins: Half day retreats
with breakfast, Dharma Talk and Dharma
Interview. 5 - 11:30 a.m., Sundays:
5/30, 6/13, 7/11, 8/8, 9/12, 10/10, 10/24,
11/14, 12/12.

Summer Sesshin: 6/26/10 - 7/2/10
Autumn Sesshin: 9/25/10 - 10/1/10
Rohatsu Sesshin: 1/2/11 - 1/10/11
Spring Sesshin: 3/26/10 - 4/1/11

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

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 \$350. Members may subtract their monthly dues from the week-long sesshin cost. For more information see: www.choboji.org



Dai Bai Zan Cho Ba Zen Ji

Plum Mountain News
1811 20th Ave.
Seattle, WA 98122