

禅のこだま



Ekizen

Shinnyo-ji Sangha Newsletter

Fall 2010

授戒会

Lay Initiation Ceremony - Jukai



Shinnyo-ji Zen Temple

Sunday, September 26th 2010 at 11:00 am

Master Iten Shinnyo will give vows

During the Bodhisattva initiation Ceremony

at the presence of

Reverend Ryushin Azuma Roshi

72nd Abbot of Daijo-ji Monastery



Report

Ken Zen Ichinyo (- the Fist -Zen - like One). Zen as Intuition and the (Karate) fist as Action, are like One. In the state of *mushin* the dual mind is not manifested. In this state, action comes spontaneously out from intuition so that the One, the Absolute, is manifested.

On June 21st 2010 - summer solstice - our Master Iten Shinnyo met the practitioners of the International Shorin Ryu Karate Kobudo Federation of Florence and their instructor Renshi Alberto Doni. After the usual Karate training, Master

Shinnyo gave a brief introductory speech about Zen Buddhism and practice. It was followed by a lively time of question and answer. The evening continued with an intensive Zazen and ended with a cup of tea. It was a truly deep time and a further stage in the old bond of the two Masters. We hope it has been just the beginning of a fruitful exchange and a meeting point between the two schools. We invited Renshi Doni and his students to our Temple in September to practice again together.

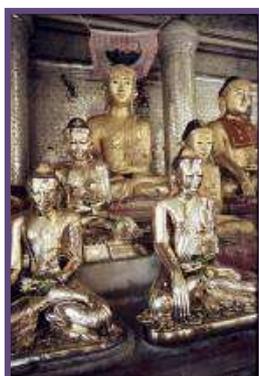


A Korean Embassy offered to the Shogun Tokugawa Imitsu a marvelous Siberian tiger, particularly beautiful, strong and ferocious. The Japanese master had a fence built for the tiger inside the park of his palace. The exotic animal became the latest fashionable attraction. One day, while he was showing his tiger to some prestigious guests, the Shogun turned to Yagyū Munemori, his master of arms, and said: "Don't you usually say that the ultimate goal of the martial arts is winning without fighting? It would be interesting to demonstrate it with this beast. It would be at least an actual test."

When Yagyu faced the challenge made by his sovereign and in front of the other Samurais, he didn't have any possibility to escape. He was a great master of the most famous sword school. Cautiously, Yagyu kept the swords attached to his belt to demonstrate that he was not in need of them. He never confronted such a big beast before that was not even from the Japanese forest. He simply took off his silk shirt in order to be more comfortable and ease tension. Deeply concentrated and fan in hand, he got into the fence. Immediately, the restless tiger growled and kept away from him walking around him in large circles. Penetrating gaze, impassive face, firm step, body full of *ki* (vital energy), Yagyu Munemori was not losing sight of the beast. He was pointing his fan against the tiger as if it was a *katana* and without the slightest break-out in his concentration. He got closer to the tiger with its same queenliness and agility as if he were one with the beast.

The tiger was showing its fangs, scratching the air, pretending to jump and ended up going back visibly powerless. Master Yagyu's *fudoshin* (state of vigilance) was total. His spirit was not disturbed by any thought, shadow or fear. He was able to catch the slightest intention of the beast and prevent its reactions. He pressed the tiger relentlessly behind the trees in the bamboo grove. The big Hunter of the Taiga was ousted and transformed into a hunted prey. Finally, the tiger gave up and got trapped in a corner of

the fence. Hard-pressed and furious, the beast crouched and was visibly ready to attempt a desperate assault. The viewers' attention was almost touchable and their anxiety was growing, since the result of the fight was still uncertain. The tiger, with its 300 kilogram power of Nature, could jump up in a flash and splitting the head of the man with a fatal blow. Nevertheless, *kensei* 'genius of the sword' was behaving as if he was confident of victory, and capable of challenging the attack of the beast in drawing his sword to cut its throat.



When close to the tiger, Yagyu jumped forward and screamed a formidable *kiai*. He concentrated all his energy in the scream and in his right arm. The Master's fan hit the tiger between the eyes and the petrified beast crouched on the grass.

The Master retreated in a state of *zanshin* without looking away from the beast that stood up again shaking its head.

Yagyu was happy enough of his own performance when he crossed back the door of the fence under the admiring eyes of his fellows. The *Shogun* hastened to compliment Yagyu and said: "I am happy to have you as my instructor. You have a high degree of skill indeed. You are the living proof of

your famous ideal of winning without fighting. Few men would be capable to stand up in front of such a ferocious and dangerous enemy without taking out their swords. Isn't it true, Reverend Takuan?"

The *Shogun* turned to the Zen Master who was next to him. Even though Master Takuan never practiced the sword art, he was famous for his masterly disquisitions about the best interior attitude to be adopted by a *Samurai*. The monk smiled and said the following sublime words that sounded like leaves falling down from the enlightenment tree: "Winning without fighting is an admirable precept, yet an incomparable saying comes to my mind as follows:

Even though you win your enemy,

He will remain your enemy

But if you try to convince him

He will be your friend.

The *Shogun* was slightly upset and ironically said: "Since you are a religious person who does not know anything about arms, I am not going to ask you to demonstrate this saying with such a beast. Even though your words are very convincing, I doubt that they can convince a tiger."

The courtiers laughed together with the Master of Japan but they stopped immediately when the monk got into the fence. The *Shogun* waved immediately the guardian of the beast who was petrified in front of the fence door. The *daimyos* too were terrorized at the idea of getting into the fence to help the incautious monk who pretty much threw himself in the mouth of the tiger. Everybody was convinced that

the tiger would revenge against the monk for the previous humiliation inflicted by the other man. While a particularly cautious or not brave enough samurai ran away to grab an arch, his colleagues took out their swords and were discussing the strategy to be used in front of the fence door. An excessive number of people inside the fence could scare the beast or make it even more furious. As for Takuan Soho, he kept quietly advancing towards the tiger like a tea master meeting a guest in his little pacific world. First, the beast showed its tusks and then it started slowly and suspiciously moving towards the man.



The tiger smelled the air without stopping advancing. The monk stopped with blessed expression and allowed the tiger advancing. The Shogun waved the samurais to stay in place and look what was going on, since he was curious about the monk's attitude and willing to see whether he had supernatural powers. The encounter took place without the tiger showing the slightest aggressiveness. With enlighten smiling face, the monk lifted his arms in offering them to the tiger's jaws. The beast smelled his arms and started leaking them. When Takuan caressed its back, the tiger rubbed against him like a cat. The tiger took the monk

up to the fence door pushing him with little strokes under the rude warriors' moved look. Takuan Soho was warmly welcomed by the Shogun who said: "I was not asking for so much. However, you gave us a convincing demonstration of the superiority of your wisdom and powers. We samurai decisively have a lot to learn from zen monks." The monk replied: "We practitioners of the Buddhist Way don't see in our neighbor a potential enemy to be overwhelmed. We simply try to wake up the Buddha Nature that sleeps in every living being. Our only motivation is compassion and frequently animals are more sensitive to it.

From 'Stories of Japanese Sages' by Pascal Faulliot, Italian translation by Vera Verdiani, L'ippocampo editore, Milano 2009

Dear Master,
I send to you this short story that I particularly love. If I were about to explain the reason why it impressed me, I couldn't express it in words. It is able to communicate a set of emotions that I feel connected to the Path I took. In Reverend Monk's actions, I strongly feel the echo of your Teaching about the reduction of the ego and the effort we should make to abandon the instinctual sentiment of prevaricating one on another that our societies imposes us. You teach us all the time that we have to open our hearts to compassion, the same compassion that joins the monk of the story to the tiger and to all cosmos in a universal breathing. The tiger, instead of

being like a mortal danger as all aspects of our lives that we perceive against us, becomes an affectionate part of ourselves that help us to go through the Enlightenment Path.

Gassho
Federico



What is Zen?
I don't know.
We sit, we walk,
We accept life with gratitude.
Enlightenment! Laughter!
Enlightenment walks down the street,
Catch it, catch it, catch it to your pocket,
if you can!

ISMO



In this issue we inserted a poem by Giuseppe Ungaretti from his work collection that goes under the same title (1940-45):

Time is silent
(literal translation)
Time is silent between motionless reeds.....
A canoe wandered far away from landing.....
The rower extenuated and inert.....
The skies already decayed in abysses of smokes.....
Stretched in vain to the edge of memories,
Perhaps falling down was merciful
He didn't know
That world and mind is the same illusion,
That in the mystery of his own waves
Every earthly voice wrecks.
(Giuseppe Ungaretti)

There are moments in life when time seems to stop and everything around us is like paralyzed. Those are moments when we should stop ... As well as sometimes it would be important to 'really' sit and shed light on our dark corners, observing our lives and our path, putting some order and getting rid of the superfluous. Often it is not what we do. We keep going on with no destination, only because we fear to look inside ourselves and abandon all the crutches that, once added together, hold us in a precarious balance. While we are navigating in this manner, wandering without visualizing a final destination, we get tired even though we are not aware of it, and at a certain point we find ourselves out of energy, inert. We can't see the light of the sky anymore but only the fogs of our confusion.

Then we try to rebuild the road, the intersection where we got lost and maybe touching the bottom is sometimes healthy... touching those mechanism of the mind that gives us a fallacious image of the world that creates a continuous illusion.

Until we follow our stormy mental waves, our cries will wreck. When we can fly higher, on the wings of the Big Mind with an open and full of compassion Heart, the mystery of life will unfold before our eyes.

In this poem Ungaretti's vision is interesting because it declares that the world and our minds are both illusory images.

Master Iten Shinnyo

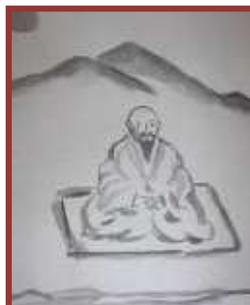


Aurora

One day I met a woman with a sincere smile who really impressed me. I met her at Shinnyo-ji Temple. Her name was Aurora. A beautiful name. Aurora (*dawn*) like 'birth' or 'birthing state'.

Aurora died few weeks ago. We are bewildered and speechless in facing Death. Her Death contains Dawn to me. A Re-birth I would say. I am not referring to reincarnation which is a too complex subject for me, but rather to what she instilled in those who met her. She's still with me and with all of us. She will smile every time we will think and talk about her who had the strength to smile by choice. A woman who loved the sun and saw it every time she was able to. And other dawns will rise in the hearts of other men and women like her.

Giancarlo



Za-zen

(literal translation)

Now that I'm not looking for something anymore,

Now that I don't want anything anymore,

Everything seems to appear,

Everything seems to be mine,

Friend and stranger at the same time.

I don't see the quick and subtle line

Tempio Shinnyo-ji

That separates sky from ocean,
Neither I hear the light pulse
That separates day from night.
Stable like a mountain,
Continuously changing like a river,
I receive in myself all the forms
To leave them go,
As sand grains slipping away
from open hands.
Stable like a river,
In perpetual, continuous
changing
Like a mountain,
I embrace the Way that bonds
me to everything,
And the Way,
Generous and serene,
Embraces me.

Paolo G



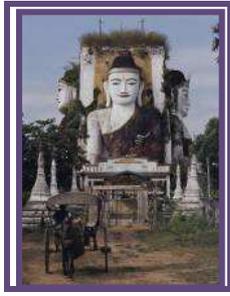
Zen of Bodhidharma

Chapter 2

Bloodstream discourse

Part 4





Notes:

(31) *The Four Elements*. The four elements that constitutes material, material body included: earth, water, fire and air.

(32) *Kashiapa*. Also called Mahakashyapa or Great Kashiapa. He was the principal disciple of Buddha and he's considered to be the first Zen Patriarch in India. When Buddha lifted a flower Kashiapa smiled and the Mind to Mind transmission began.

(33) *Bodhisattva*. The Mahayana ideal. Where there the Arhat, the Hinayana ideal, is concentrated on himself and seeks his own salvation, a Bodhisattva binds his/her liberation to that one of all beings. Instead of withdrawing the mind in Nothingness as the Arhat, the Bodhisattva expands his/her mind *ad infinitum* since he/she realizes that all beings have the same Nature.

(34) *Spirits, demons, or divine beings*. Spirits are beings with no body. Demons include various heaven gods (*deva*), ocean gods (*maga*), and earth gods (*yaksba*). The divine beings include Indra, the Lord of the 33 heavens, and Brahma, the Lord of creation.

(35) *Buddha, Dharma, and Bodhisattva*. The three elements constitute the Buddhist Refuge or Three Treasures. Dharma is the teaching of a Buddha. The Monks follow the Teaching as

well as the Bodhisattva in the Mahayana tradition.

(36) *Zen*. Term initially used to translate the Sanskrit' *dyana*', 'meditation'. Bodhidharma was the first one who related this term to daily life, rather than exclusively relate it to the sit-meditation on a pillow. The Mind that sits without sitting, acts without acting.

(37) *Shastra*. A Catalog of the Chinese Buddhist Canon, aka Tripitaka, written at the beginning of the Sixth Century, counts 2213 works among which about 1600 used to be Sutras. Since then, many Sutras were added to the Tripitaka and much more got lost. The actual Canon includes 1662 works.



Jukai

When I asked our Master to receive the Precepts, I wrote a short and instant letter.

Suddenly one night, my request was clear and undoubted to me. So I took pen and paper and I wrote my letter. All the doubts I had in the last months disappeared. They were related to the fact that I missed many of my Master's Teachings. This fact was not affecting me anymore. My request was already made and it was up to the Master whether to accept it. And it got accepted. After that, I started attending the Teachings once a month. My determination changed into expectation. A date that would change my state as a practitioner was marked on my calendar. I was really disappointed when it got cancelled. I felt like someone took off the rug under my feet. I felt abandoned since I live so

far away and don't have the possibility to attend consistently the Temple. Receiving the Precepts was to me a kind of formalization of my belonging to the Sangha and to the Master. I felt like I was pushed back in a sort of limb, pending on an official legalization.

The day after the cancellation, Shinnyo called me up and told me: "You are not alone". She listened to my complaints and repeated: "You are not alone." I didn't understand that immediately. I avoided over-reflecting about it or trying to accommodate my expectations. I let the invitation vibrating in myself. The date was postponed much forward. That allowed us to attend more Teachings and preparation times. But another doubt arose: "Will I be able to attend all the Teachings until April?"

Going to Florence once a month it's not that easy as it looks. There are many things that can interfere with the trip: work, family, health, contingencies, rollovers asked by the other practitioners who undergo the same problems. I decided simply to observe my doubts without giving them to much importance or trying to increase my determination. I didn't want to have another goal!

Few days ago our Master asked us to write something about our experience, the Teachings, or Jukai. So that I had to recollect my ideas and see what was going on in my mind. With my greatest surprise, I realized that my fear of not attending all the Teachings disappeared. Jukai was not a problem anymore. It was neither a goal

nor a destination. It was not even a necessity. It's not a problem to miss one or all the Teachings. It's not even a problem not to do Jukai. The most important thing is going to the Temple whenever possible, seeing the other practitioners, and hearing the Master. With or without receiving the Precepts, it must be this way. Would I reduce my attendance of the Temple after receiving the Precepts? It would be an obvious non-sense. What I feel is a strong sensation of freedom. May be I am even advantaged in all disadvantages to ensure my practice with the Sangha. I have a great luck: I live far away; it takes a long time to get to the Temple, and my tiredness is more incisive. It is a privileged status.

PierPaolo



Everything flows

It is difficult for me to find time to do Zazen when I am in summer vacation. It is easier during my working routine when I don't even have time to think. Some time ago, I dropped the idea that it is always the same 'me' who is sitting on the pillow, and that things should be in a certain way according to my logic or criteria. The present moment 'here and now' flows in harmony. It is not a matter of my ego.

Sometimes, I accept what the present moment brings to me and I flow with it. When it happens, my practice flows quiet and silent like a placid river.

Other times, I cling to a certain preferences, or I oppose myself to the natural flow of things. In both cases, my practice turns into a bunch of noisy thoughts. I never experimented anything further than the two separated levels above. Nevertheless, I am starting guess that without the first one, I couldn't experiment the second one. Therefore, they don't seem to me to be two distinctive levels anymore. It is just one level that pulsates in harmony and I pulsate in accordance with it.

Eva



I began practicing Zen in Rome in 2007 and since then I have bought many books published by Ubaldini Edizioni (1) and written by various Masters from different Buddhist traditions.

This year in August, only few days ago, I decided to participate to the 5 day *sesshin* at the Shinnyo-ji Temple. All I had learnt from my books and I was trying somehow to put in practice, became suddenly transparent. I was able to experiment what 'practicing in daily life' really means, supported by the immense compassion of Master Shinnyo and the help of a marvelous Sangha. At the third day of the

retreat, I asked Master Shinnyo the permission to receive the precepts in complete conviction and with the biggest joy in my heart. It has been lovely accepted. The 26th of September, 2010, the day of the Initiation Ceremony, it will be my entrance day to the Bodhisattva Path, the greatest honor and joy one can receive. I traveled around the world but I wouldn't have ever thought to find such a treasure.

(1)The Italian publishing house specialized in books about religious and spiritual subjects very well known among the Italian practitioners also for its unmistakable light blue covers.

Regina



Rite: between impediment and freedom

Rite helps us to keep up mindfulness, if we look at it as an implement to go deeper inside ourselves. Rite is also a goal if we practice it in complete mindfulness of the present moment. It can become an obstacle if we practice it to protect ourselves from our fears. It shouldn't become an automatic habit. We should practice a ritual every day in an aware manner. Being aware during a rite means to vivify the rite itself. Life expresses itself through it when we are completely aware of doing it. Thanks a lot to Ekizen that gives me the possibility to express some of my thoughts. I hope that I will continue the Zazen practice and be inspired by Maestro Shinnyo and the Sangha.

I humbly place my hands in Gassho for all of you.

Riccardo

We look forward to seeing you at the next EkiZen issue!

Gassho



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