

禅のこだま

EKIZEN - Newsletter by the Shinnyoji Sangha

Summer 2013- n. 15 Year IV



Certified Registration of Kokusai Fukyoshi Sokanbu Europe
Marradi Shinnyo
Name assigned by Kokusia Fukyoshi Europe
1 April, 2013
President of the Soto School Rev. Fukuyama Taihi Zenji

Our Teacher Shinnyo Roshi attended the General Assembly 2013 hosted by the Association "Centre européen du Bouddhisme Soto Zen" at the La Gerndronnière Temple in France from Friday May 17th to Sunday May 19th.



During the Assembly, the Teacher received appointment as Kokusai Fukyoshi for Europe, authorized missionary Teacher for the the diffusion of Buddhism beyond Japan.

At the same time, Shinnyoji was enlist by the Japanese SotoShu School as an authorized Temple outside of Japan.

TESTIMONIES

A drop of gold

You have left a drop has rooted itself and is the seed of of transmission. and makes me same time it helps, restores and gives



change assumes strength. It is an important natural process of continuous evolutionary growth, day after day as you teach me and as you have taught me. A Teaching of love. With you, spiritual faith and determination are born through your example. It's true, I have changed my spiritual path, but I meditation following your example of dedication, strength and deep respect for every being, silent and great welcoming, I listen.

What you have given me goes beyond rituals or belief, it is a glimmer of intuition and ease in my heart that awaken and grow on my path in everyday life. I pray for

of gold in my heart, it continues to grow. It spiritual initiation and Sometimes it hurts bleed, but at the it leaves a mark, it me awareness. The

Gino and Massimiliano everyday as you have asked and for others who month after month become more and more, following your guidelines of compassion. Thank you for the inspiration Teacher. With deep respect and emotion, aspiring humility in my heart and with your daily example and strong teachings that I am learning.

Gasshō,
Riccardo

FORM

I have been reflection upon my practice, even though it continues daily, I miss being at the Temple and having the opportunity to learn the Form. A couple weeks ago I saw an informative flyer from a Sōtō Zen Sangha here in Seattle about a Sesshin they were hosting. It was last week and I decided to go. They Sangha had rented a small house in the woods, the environment was spectacular. However, I immediately realized that that this even would not have given me the spiritual satisfaction that I feel at Shinnyoji amongst my Sangha and my Teacher. This "Sesshin" lasted only 4 hours and didn't include a trace of Form, no Sanpai before reciting the Sutra and no gasshō to our pillow before sitting in meditation. It got hot after a while and someone in this Sangha actually took off the top part of his samu-e! But at by the end of the day, I felt their generous and warm hearts. They welcomed me into their group with a compassionate spirit and I am happy to have had this experience.

It helped me recognize the importance of Form in our practice. I will be happy to come to our Sesshin this September and I have grateful for the brief teaching that I was lucky to have received at Shinnyoji. In the meantime, I will continue my practice alone, with you.

Thanks for everything.

I miss all of you!

gasshō
Tenshin



My husband has been practicing with the Sangha since January. He doesn't practice Zen, he practices yoga. The teachings don't speak about Buddha, they speak about God. They don't even call themselves a Sangha, they are a meditation group, they don't call me Yōshin, they call me Eva.

When after practice I start cleaning and tidying up the meditation room and the coordinator asks me, "Eva, what are you doing? You're already at work?", I know

that I am One with what the Teacher has transmitted to me, so intimately I am One. I am Buddha and it is thanks solely to the Teacher Shinnyo Roshi sama that I am aware of it and that Buddhahood can manifest itself in my daily life. Wherever I am. Whatever I face.

“Practice is not a question of far or near” (Sandōkai)

In Gasshō,
Eva Yōshin

PENELOPE'S WEB

This story tells the legend of how Penelope destroyed the night during the day, or something like that. I am doing the same thing with my spiritual practice. One day I build it, the next I destroy it. My teacher gave me the name Shinkai, meaning Spirit of the Precepts. Shinnyo Roshi, in her deep wisdom knew to read into the depths of my heart, until touching it, but in my everyday life I am very far for this lifestyle. I wrote a poem once, but I can't find it now, but I went more or less like this:

In the flight of a heron I perceived my suffering, in that very light flight, so different from the weight of my life.

Two close friends have committed suicide. When it happened, I didn't understand, but I understand their pain a little more everyday, their weariness of living, their paths without escape. I know that we can be happy, I have been happy and I remember very well, it has stayed with me to this day, but it's not enough. I would like to be able to flow with life like the line of smoke from a stick of incense: in silence, without leaving a trace. The smile upon my Teacher's serene face every time she sees me reminds me that I will make it and perhaps I'm not that far. Deep down, it's true that an immaculate lotus blooms from dirty water. Soon I can reach that sensation of no longer searching and will be able to transmit it to all those I will meet until they feel relieved looking at me.

Gasshō
Shinkai

The more I look around, the more I realize that everything really is One. Sometimes it seems like something isn't going well, or that everything is going wrong all morning and things won't get better in the afternoon... I hope for the evening serenity. On the other hand, there are days that seem from out of a book, so perfect that I look around thinking: what strange peace, where is the trap?! But then days, weeks or years later, things begin to come together, I start to see insight in something, like a puzzle that put itself together, a light that turned on in my brain and suddenly I yell, “that's why!”

But the problem, at least for me, is that I can have a biased vision on one part of the puzzle, it is as if I can almost see everything and then - POOF - everything disappears, leaving me with my finger pointing to nothing while I come closer to have a better look, to tell a friend what I have found.

All is One, I must keep this in mind.

Gasshō

Margherita

During the last Zazenkaï, assigned to be the Tenzo helper, I was asked to prepare the fruit.

I prepared it while the Teacher, our Sangha and the visiting Dutch Sangha were in the Zendo in Zazen.

As our Teacher says, my practice was in that moment.

With mental presence - as if I were in Zazen - I started my work.

I tried not to judge importance and simply cut the fruit.

I would like to be able to live every moment and every situation of my life with that attitude, channelling my energy in the present moment.

Thank you Teacher for the life lessons that you teach us everyday.

Gasshō

Lō

It is hard for me to live a serene life. Normal.

For some people destiny, chance, or however you want to call event that happen can be very devastating. Crippling.

A series of events has happened to me and my family that are caused by a tiny thing in ink, that has changed our lives, personalities and destiny.

I know that I am in good company because everyday I hear and read about destinies difficult as mine. Mourning, prison, betrayal, judgement errors, struggles. These problems are often due to other problems spawned from a grudge, anger and other mental poisons.

It is good for me to look in the eyes of my Teacher Shinnyo Roshi who knows, understands and feels. Knowing that she is waiting for me, she knows that I will return. Shinkai will come back to being who he was and his path will start again from where he left it.

If I still going and every now and then I feel a little better, it is thanks to her.

Thank you Teacher.

Shinkai

Zazen tonight
The serene Teacher
The open sky.

Happy journey,

Gasshō
Shinden

Tonight I heard the Teacher strongly speak about the Zen Way, She seemed to express the clarity, seriousness, cleanliness and respect of the Tradition in an extreme manner. An "extreme" speech, almost like a zen poem on faith and honesty. I happily agree with everything that was said; no new cages, competitions and strings that contaminate the true substance of our way, as well as happiness and joy of the peculiar questions from our Teacher and from the Patriarchs. Where is Zen? Here it is! Thank you Teacher, thank you!



Gasshō
Luigi Shinden Oldani

During the day of Zazenkai with the Dutch Sangha that visited Shinnyoji, there was a moment that hit me hard. In the afternoon all of the Sangha was together listening to the Teacher speak of her Pilgrimage to the 88 temples, about the temples themselves and the rituals performed before and during the visit. In her discussion, she mentioned the beginning lines of Hannya Shingyō, The Heart Sutra, that is recited before passing the threshold of a temple. I don't think that she wanted to say the whole thing, maybe I'm wrong, but what I understood was that just by mentioning the Sutra the Sangha began to recite it completely naturally, like a spontaneous breath. I was moved, it was a beautiful moment, we were an embrace, in that moment we were One.

Gasshō
Goshin

My precious friend, How are you? I'm doing very well.
I am writing to let you know that my Zazen has changed over the past few weeks. To be exact, I remember the precise day: January 19th, late morning.
I'm not sure if you all were at a Sesshin that weekend or what, but that morning something special happened: I felt like a "connection", a "flow", a "continuation" with all those who have sat in Zazen before me, with the Patriarchs up until Gautama Sakuamuni. I mean a physical feeling, like something was flowing in my blood.
I felt it only for a moment, a flash, a minutes, I'm not sure.
The truth is that since then, my Zazen feels different, I can stay "behind" observing more "distance".

Gasshō
PierPaolo

It seems natural for us human beings to think of things as being either good or bad, useful for useless, at least I find myself thinking like this. We certainly need reason and common sense in our everyday lives, and we should be grateful for this ability.

All in all, something we remain trained in these concepts. Life is surprising and can bring us things and opportunities that we didn't expect.

One of the greatest joys of Zen practice is its strength of letting us accept, as our Teacher says, everything as it is.

In practice, being able to see beyond the prejudice of our small minds is a great gift.

After all everything seems good, right?

Thank so much Teacher Shinnyo, thanks to the Shinnyoji Sangha!

With hands in Gasshō,

Shinkō

I take much more from the Temple than I could ever give back. Shinnyoji is a special place and is always in my heart.

I bow with deep thankfulness in front of the Teacher and in front of all of you who, under the Teacher's guidance, give something everyday to the Temple.

Marco V.

Everything has a reason
but not a shape,
the root is pure
reality is absolute,
Why ask where you are going?

Gasshō
Yūshin

It's the last minute to write something for the Spring Ekizen, I'm searching for something to come to me, which sometimes does happen, blooming from my mind. But more often than not, rather, I must stop and think about my practice; it requires a daily effort, this is very useful, like sitting Zazen. Even this requires a daily effort that must not weaken, from my with the passage of time that is the part, but it is also the core of our practice.

experience,
fundamental



Gasshō
Gregorio

There is a lot arising at Shinnyoji, lots of news happening. One of the happiest and most important is our Teacher's appointment to Kokusai Fukyoshi, Authorized Soto Zen Missionary from the Japanese Shumicho office to spread Soto Zen outside of Japan. This is a very important appointment for our Teacher and therefore also for us, her disciples.

Whoever doesn't know about Zen, read about the teachers and disciples could turn their noses up at it thinking that we are nuts. In actuality, feeling like a disciple of a Teacher for 50 years makes me think so, but to understand what it is you must approach it. Oftentimes we can't see well from far away and things aren't exactly what they seem. Our Way is nothing like sect and to be a disciple doesn't at all mean that must succumb something. Our walk is spiritual growth and any walk of the soul can't begin with some one who has already been there.

Shinkai

Respect and thankfulness
for the Shinnyoji Temple
where love
is felt through
the form
is tangible through
actions
where the Sangha
in growing harmony
communicates
even with physical absence
because the mark
is permanent in the heart,
forever.

Valentina

There is great peace in the heart of Shinnyoji,
and one in the heart of the Teacher,
who refreshes our minds and we are Zazen.
Smiles return,
hearts are clear.



Benshin

Dark sky

horizontal lightning above the sea.

The rain, like a round of applause,
comes with me on my journey.

After hours of driving alone,
stopped at a ridge

I look up at the sky
the nighttime intensity
penetrates my vision.

Lucia

A couple Mondays ago, while the Teacher shared the good news about her trip to the Gerndronnière, I thought of a moment, like a picture, I saw at Varanasi...

Lucia





In some Mondo, it is asked if Kannon Bosatsu is a woman since it has a very sweet and feminine appearance, but the answer is always negative, because he is also define masculine. I'm not saying that Kannon Bosatsu was neither masculine nor feminine, this is why he could become either a man or woman, this is nothing but a manifestation of the Jihi strength, the Buddha's Compassion.

"Shukke, Zaike"

出家、在家

About 2,500 years ago in India in Shakyamuni Buddha's time, followers were divided into four Sangha groups reunited in two categories: the monks in Shukke, the faithful in Zaike. The monks, Shukke were divided into Bikku, monks and Bikkuni were nuns. The Faithful in Zaike were divided in Ubasoku, men, and Ubai, women.

The founder of our School, Dogen Zenji continued this tradition subdividing the Sangha in Shukke and Zaike, but in his vision we put more emphasis upon the Shukke Way.

In Chapter III of the Shobokenzo Zuimonki, Dogen Zenji says that the monks in today's temples think that it is better to follow worldly customs, but he doesn't agree and says that life in the Dharma must oppose worldly life.

Also Keizan Zenji followed Dogen Zenji's line in het Denkoroku teaching where we often find the expressions Shukke of the mind, Shukke of the body and also in the Keizan Zenji Shingi, "Rules of the Zen Monastery", she uses the expression Boddhisattva Shukke, Bodhisattva Zaike. In Keizan Zenji the terms Shukke and Zaide do not have one specific meaning, but many, and maybe there we find the key to understanding better how Shukke monks should be in a modern times. In the Ekōji Temple in Noto, in the Ishikawa Prefecture there is a conservation of Keizan Zenji's portrait with hair and a beard, painted in 1774. Perhaps no one knows about this painting, except for a few people.

There is also a follower who lives in our Prefecture, who without every having received any kind of ordination calls himself Zaike Dogenshu, or a faithful lay person of the Dogen school and founded a Center for Chinese Philosophical Studies and at the same time studies Dogen's Shobogenzo.

Even for me, in my private life, when I got married, the Teacher had given me Tokudo, he gave me Hammon and was angry.

In other Asian countries, like in the Buddhist Temples in Taiwan and South Korea there are some married monks and this is due influence form Japanese Buddhism. I

have heard that monks get married in the Taiko School in South Korea, but their families live outside of the Temple. The wife works in the Temple during the day and then at night returns to her home outside of the Temple while her husband remains there. Regarding the Daijōji Temple that is a Senmonsodo, only the last four Abbots from the 69th to the present 72nd one, which is myself, were married, but their families live outside of the Temple. (In the Private Temple where the succeeding son to the father Abbot vies with his family in the Temple). In Japanese History, Male monks were given permission to marry, eat meat and grow out their hair in 1872. In the following year, also female monks were given the same rights from the State. This modernization had positive and negative effects. A negative effect was losing the religiosity of the monk's customs, a secularization, a privatization of the Temple due to a hereditary system within the same family. I often hear people say that they admire Buddhists but not the behavior of the monks. Many people fear a decaying tendency in the image of Buddhism with the modern society. There has been a lot of talk recently about taxing religious institutes, maybe there will soon be a tax regime. If this possibility happens, not only in large Temples, but also the numerous small ones, they would not be able to keep their presence in the territory. What do you think about this?

Even between the worldly people, intelligent people criticize the behavior of ordinary people, sustaining that an intellectual named Kuzugen says: "Everyone is drunk, I am the only one who is not drunk" and quit following the norms of society and ended his life by jumping into a river. The Dharma is against this point of view in all aspects of the worldly vision, this is why monks become daianrakuni, people who live in free serenity from suffering, a more serene presence in the world. Therefore those who become monks absolutely must live against the worldly life.

DAIJŌ-JI DAYORI N. 114 MARCH 2013

SHINNYOJI REPORT - ITALY - DECEMBER 2012

A report has arrived about the Jōdō-e Sesshin by Iten Shinnyo san, student of the Daijō-ji Abbot, the following was translated by Nakajima Shinobu sensei.

"My Teacher, how are you?"

I heard that it has been very cold in Japan, it's been freezing here in Florence too, like it's going to snow.

The Jōdō-e
Shinnyoji went
p.m. on
there were 32
start of Zazen, at
were 20, and by
a.m. there were
and we celebrated
Illumination of
watching the



Ceremony at
well. At 8:00
December 7th
people at the
4:30 a.m. there
the end, at 7:30
11 practitioners
the Jōdō, the
the Buddha
morning stars.

I felt your
me while I sat in
night. I thank you for your Teaching and for having founded the Shinnyoji Temple.

presence with
Zazen in the



Thanks from the Shinnyoji Sangha as well. New people have been coming to Shinnyoji over the past few months to practice Zazen. Even older practitioners, all in harmony, with enthusiasm follow the practice.

The year is coming to an end, I wish you a prosperous New Year.

I Shin den Shin

Shinnyo

Kuhai"

ZAZEN AND CONFERENCE WITH PROF. ALDO TOLLINI

MAY 24, 2013

"THE LANGUAGE OF DŌGEN
EXPRESSING THE ABSOLUTE"



On Friday, May 24th, after the usual Zazen session but shortened but ending at 8:40 p.m. we held a conference with Prof. Aldo Tollini at the temple. The conference was titled, "The Language of Dōgen Expressing the Absolute"

During his discussion the professor explained to the guests and Sangha some characteristics of his linguistic style from the Patriarch to express what we know as the inexpressible, or the dimension of Illumination.

In a reality that coincides with the same reality of Illumination, also language must express this illuminated nature, the professor explained his thesis through simple words, accessible for those without background knowledge on the topic.

The conference ended at 11:00 p.m. and was followed by a small reception kindly offered by some practitioners.

Gasshō

Yūshin



POETRY

Found upon a wall in the Children's House of Calcutta and written by Mother Teresa in 1960, from the book "The Joy of Loving"

Find the time....

Find the time to think
Find the time to pray
Find the time to laugh
It is the source of power
It is the greatest power on Earth
It is the music of the soul.

Find the time to play
Find the time to to love and to be loved
Find the time to give
It is the secret of eternal youth
It is the privilege given from God
The day is too short to be selfish.

Find the time to read

Find the time to be a friend
Find the time to work
It is the source of wisdom
It is the path to happiness
It is the price of success.

Find the time for charity
It is the key to Heaven.



ZAZENKAI

MAY 11TH, 2013

Shinnyoji hosted a group of Dutch practitioners who were followers of Rients Ranzen Ritskes Roshi during the Zazenkaï on May 11th.

Ed, Bettina, Peter, Parjan, San Stefano, Desiree, Meike, Leen, Maria e Hans sat with us for the entire morning and had a formal lunch with the Shinnyoji Sangha. That afternoon the Teacher Shinnyo held a Discussion about her Pilgrimage through the 88 Shingon Temples on Shikoku Island.

DAYS LATER, WE RECEIVED THESE EMAILS:

Dear master Iten Shinnyo and Sanga,
We would like to thank you again for the great hospitality we experienced during our visit to your Zen Temple last Saturday.
Our Sanga was impressed by your devotion , tradition and rituals.
The theisso about Shikoku was very recognizable for us.
Regards to everybody in your Sanga and of course you are welcome in Holland,
warm regards

Gasshō,
Ed



THE MEAL MENU IN DUTCH AND ITALIAN

The visit from the 10 Dutch practitioners was a special surprise during this month of May. There was a lovely atmosphere while we meditated together in our small Zendo, more than 20 people, in silence, compact, very dense. We were a little nervous about such a large group coming to visit, there were many things to prepare, the Sangha was anxious. But then, everything went well, as it had to. We had lunch in the Zendo and, even with the presence of many people, the service and mealtime went by in order and care.

That afternoon we all together listened to the Teacher speak about her pilgrimage in Japan. The Dutch also listened closely thanks to Daishin who with ability and simplicity simultaneously translated what was said.

We were on the journey with the Teacher for a couple of hours, we went up long stairways, recited Hannya Shingyo, gave an offering and breathed the sacred air of the Temples and mountain freshness. It was engaging and incited eagerness to go again with the Teacher, as she asked, on a pilgrimage all together.

Thank you Teacher for having thought of us during your pilgrimage, giving each of us a special dedication in one of the 88 Temples on Shikoku Island.

Benshin



"TOGETHER FOR PEACE"



MEDITATION AND SPIRITUAL MEETINGS FOR PEACE

PALAZZO VECCHIO

MAY 7TH, 2013

On May 7th, I had the honor of representing Shinnyoji at the inter-religious meeting held in Palazzo Vecchio. Knowing that I was there on behalf of the Teacher, of the Temple and the Sangha pushed me to get involved and be as present as possible and to read clearly and confidently what the Teacher had asked me to read.

I was nervous and excited when I arrived. Marco and Sandra's welcoming warmth, friend whom I have know for awhile, reassured me and also the fact knowing that our Teacher is very respected admired amongst those in the inter-religious group.

Throughout the meeting there were lectures on various religious traditions and on meditation. The piece that I read, in contribution to our Temple, was an extract from this year's theme of practice: MUSHIN.

Being able to read this extract did a lot of good for me. I practiced reading it a few times and this let me stop and revisit a few of the concepts. The existence of MUSHIN is a big task in everyday life, I realize how often I lose myself in thought, away from the flow of life. However, knowing that this possibility exists, what we can always access, is comforting and a motivation in our practice. It is also what my life is asking for in this moment, to accept uncertainty, without falling into one of the lovely and assuring boxes of safety in which we feel comfortable.

I was impressed by the sentence that the Teacher cited by Dōgen Zenji that states that the MUSHIN mind is “like the pure air of white clouds” and that it is similar to the Zen monastic life that go from Temple to Temple searching for their Teacher without anything to choose from or to plan.

The paragraph on MUSHIN did only strike me, but also those who were listening, the Teacher received many compliments. So our small and growing reality was appreciated and is present in this monthly event in the city.

Benshin



IV ANNIVERSARY OF THE PERMANENT LOCATION OF SHINNYOJI 25 APRIL 2013

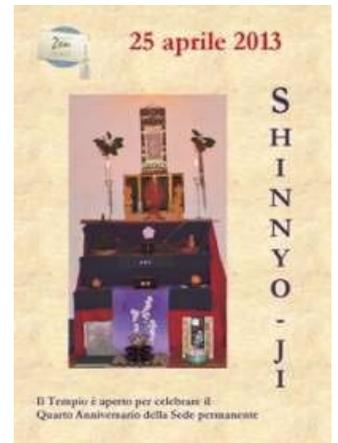
Shinnyoji moved to its permanent location in Via Vittorio Emanuele II 171 on April 25th, 2009.

Every year Shinnyoji holds an open house to celebrate the anniversary of its permanent foundation to anyone who wishes to visit.

This year Zazenkai was held in the morning and then from 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. the Sangha welcomed visitors.

During the open house, visitors could request an interview with the Teacher Shinnyo, receive a lesson on the Form and sit in Zazen, as well as take some information on the Temple.

The Zendo was staffed by a practitioner in Zazen during the entire day as a testimony of practice and of the reality of the Temple and Meditation Room.



THE TEACHER SHINNYO WITH THE SANGHA DURING THE ANNIVERSARY






Tempio Giuwon-ji
 10000 Via della Pace, 10 - 00187 Roma, Italia
 Tel. +39 06 47810000
 Fax +39 06 47810001
 Email: info@giuwon.it

STAFFETTA DI ZAZEN - 25 aprile 2013

08:00-09:30	SARINA
09:30-10:00	LE
10:00-10:30	Bershin
10:30-11:00	Lucie
11:00-11:30	Stindon
11:30-12:00	Goshin
12:00-12:30	Gregorie
12:30-13:00	Sinclair
13:00-13:30	Fayve
13:30-14:00	Stindon
14:00-14:30	Valentina
14:30-15:00	Lucie
15:00-15:30	LE
15:30-16:00	Bershin
16:00-16:30	Mario
16:30-17:00	Fayve
17:00-17:30	Sinclair
17:30-18:00	Goshin
18:00-18:30	LE
18:30-19:00	Fayve



April 25th, 2013:
Anniversary of the
of the Shinnyoji

Fourth present location
Temple.

This year saw our Temple come closer and sink even deeper roots, grow and find its place, just like the little Japanese tree that Yumiko donated to us exactly one year ago and that is still growing strong and



the Maple kindly ago,

thriving in our garden under the care of our Sangha.

Slowly, also the practitioners at Shinnyoji, like the small plant, have all deepened their roots upon the ground of the Path guided and sustained by our Teacher, gusts of wind have shaken the branches but year after year the trunk gets stronger.

This year, as in the ones past, a staff of practitioners in Zazen was there throughout the whole Anniversary day. While the morning of Zazenkaï helped harmonize all of the practitioners, it was also the best way to celebrate the birthday of our Temple.

As usual, the day did not only involve a long day of practice, but it was also dedicated to the open house and visitors. In the afternoon, after a lunch eaten in silence, the Temple doors were opened to welcome visitors and friends who wanted to share this joyous day.

This day went by in harmonious serenity, and ended as scheduled at 7:00 p.m.

Gasshō

Yūshin

ZEN TEACHING OF THE BODHIDHARMA

CHAPTER 4: THE AWAKENING SERMON

The sutras of the Buddha are true. But long ago, when that great bodhisattva was cultivating the seed of enlightenment, it was to counter the three poisons that he made his three vows.

Practicing moral prohibitions to counter the poisons of greed, he vowed to put an end to all evils. Practicing meditation to counter the poison of anger, he vowed to

cultivate all virtues. And practicing wisdom to counter the poison of delusion, he vowed to liberate all beings. Because he persevered in these three pure practices of morality, meditation, and wisdom, he was able to overcome the three poisons and reach enlightenment. By overcoming the three poisons he wiped out everything sinful and thus put an end to evil. By observing the three sets of precepts he did nothing but good and thus cultivated virtue. And by putting an end to evil and cultivating virtue he consummated all practices, benefited himself as well as others, and rescued mortals everywhere. Thus he liberated beings.

You should realize that the practice you cultivate doesn't exist apart from your mind. If your mind is pure, all buddha-lands are pure. The sutras say, "If their minds are impure, beings are impure. If their minds are pure,

beings are pure." And "To reach a buddha-land, purify your mind. As your mind becomes pure, buddha-lands become pure." Thus by overcoming the three poisoned states of mind the three sets of precepts are automatically fulfilled.



But the sutras say the six paramitas are charity, morality, patience, devotion, meditation, and wisdom. Now you say the paramitas refer to the purification of the senses. What do you mean by this? And why are they called ferries?

Cultivating the paramitas means purifying the six senses by overcoming six thieves. Casting out the thief of the eye by abandoning the visual world is charity. Keeping out the thief of the ear not listening to sounds is morality. Humbling the thief of the nose by equating all smells as neutral is patience. Controlling the thief of the mouth by conquering desires to taste, praise and explain is devotion. Quelling the thief of body by remaining unmoved by sensations of touch is meditation. And taming the thief of the mind by not yielding to delusions but practicing wakefulness is wisdom. These six paramitas are transports. Like boats or rafts, they transport beings to the other shore. Hence they are called ferries.

忍辱精進禪定智慧等今言六根清淨名波羅蜜者若為
 通會又六度者其義如何答欲修六度當淨六根先降
 六賊能捨眼賊離諸色境名為布施能禁耳賊於彼聲
 塵不令縱逸名為持戒能伏鼻賊等諸香臭自在調柔
 名為忍辱能制口賊不食諸味讚詠請說名為精進能
 降身賊於諸弱慾遷然不動名為禪定能調意賊不順
 無明常修覺慧名為智慧六度者運也六波羅蜜喻若
 船後能運眾生達於彼岸故名六度
 問經云禪迦如來為菩薩時曾飲三斗六升乳糜方成
 佛道先因飲乳後證佛果豈唯觀心得解脫也答成佛
 如此言無虛妄也必因食乳然始成佛言食乳者有二

the
eye
by
the

But when Shakyamuni was a bodhisattva, he consumed three bowls of milk and six ladles of gruel (89) prior to attaining enlightenment. If he had to drink milk before he could taste the fruit of buddhahood, how can merely beholding the mind result in liberation?

What you say is true. That is how he attained enlightenment. He had to drink milk before he could become a buddha. But there are two kinds of milk. that which

Shakyamuni drank wasn't ordinary impure milk but pure dharma-milk. The three bowls were these three sets of precepts. And the six ladles were the six paramitas. When Shakyamuni attained enlightenment, it was because he drank this pure dharma-milk that he tasted the fruit of buddhahood. To say that the Tathagata drank the worldly concoction of impure, rank-smelling cow's milk is the height of slander. That which is truly so, the indestructible, passionless dharma-self, remains forever free of the world's afflictions. Why would it need impure milk to satisfy its hunger or thirst?

The sutras say, "This ox doesn't live in the highlands or the lowlands. It doesn't eat grain or chaff. And it doesn't graze with cows. The body of this ox is the color of burnished gold." The ox refers to Vairocana. (90). Owing to his great compassion for all beings, he produces from

種佛所食者非是世間不淨之乳乃是清淨法乳三斗
 者三聚淨戒六升者六波羅蜜成佛道時由食如是清
 淨法乳方證佛果若言如來食於世間和合不淨牛糞
 腥乳豈不謗誤之甚真如者自是金剛不壞無漏法身
 永離世間一切諸苦豈須如是不淨之乳以充飢渴經
 所說其牛不在高原不在下濕不食穀麥糠粃不與特
 牛同群其牛身作紫磨金色言牛者毗盧舍那佛也以
 大慈悲憐愍一切故於清淨法海中出如是三聚淨戒
 六波羅蜜微妙法乳養育一切求解脫者如是真淨之
 牛清淨之乳非但如來飲之成道一切眾生若能飲者
 皆得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提

within his pure dharma-body the sublime dharma-milk of the three sets of precepts and six paramitas to nourish all those who seek liberation. the pure milk of such a truly pure ox not only enable the Tathagata to achieve buddhahood but also enables any beings who drinks it to attain unexcelled, complete enlightenment.

Notes

(89) Milk... gruel. After engaging in ascetic practices for a number of years to no avail, Shakyamuni broke his fast by drinking this milk-gruel offered by Nandabala, daughter of a cowherd chieftan. After drinking it, he sat down under a tree and resolved not to rise until he had attained enlightenment.

(90) Vairocana. The Great Sun Buddha, who embodies the dharma-self or true body of the Buddha. As such, Vairocana is the central figure in the pantheon of five dhyanī buddhas, which includes Akshobhya in the East, Ratnasambhava in the South, Amitabha in the West, and Amogasiddhi in the North.

INTERPRETATION OF THE HEART SUTRA BY T. GRIFFITH FOULK

Beginning with this number of EKZ we will start the translation, authorized by the author Prof. R. Griffith Foulk, from the Conference that was held at La Gendronnière from 19-21 October 2012 for the Annual Sokambu Seminar, Office of Soto Zen Buddhism in Europe.

PROF. T. GRIFFITH FOULK

Graduated from Williams College, he followed a research doctorate in Buddhist Studies at University of Michigan in 1987.

He studied in Zen Monasteries in Japan, Buddhist Studies, special research interests on philosophical, literal, social and historic aspects of Buddhism, in particular the Ch'an / Zen tradition.

Head co-editor of the Soto Zen Text Project in Tokyo.

Member of the directing committee of the Buddhist Section of the American Academy of Religion from 1987-1994 and from 2003 to the present.

Mender of the council of the Kuroda Institute for Buddhist studies.

He received scholarships from the Fulbright Foundation, Mellon, Japan Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

He has taught at the University of Michigan, University of Toronto, and at UC Berkeley.

His publications include Standard Observations of the Soto Zen School (Vo. 1: translations, and Vol. 2: Introduction, glossary, and index), and numerous articles on intellectual history and instruction of Zen Buddhism in China and Japan.

Professor of Asiatic Religions from the Sarah Lawrence College since 1995.



CHAPTER 1

Early Buddhist Doctrines Referenced in the Heart Sūtra

Early (pre-Mahāyāna) Buddhist texts establish the doctrine of no-self

They argue that there is nothing in existence that can truly be called “me” or “mine,” because the things we ascribe those labels to (our bodies, thoughts, feelings, property, family and friends, etc.) are not actually within our complete, autonomous control. Because nothing meets the definition of “self”, “self” is an empty a null set.

What we conventionally (and deludedly) call “self” is actually just a collection of impermanent, causally conditioned phenomena, called dharmas. The “self” has no real existence, but dharmas are really existing things that have “own-being”.

No thing that consists of parts has “own-being,” i.e. self-sufficiency, because its existence depends on those parts. Only indivisible entities (comparable to the ancient Greek concept of atoms) that exist in and of themselves meet the definition of a “dharma.”

Thus, the names we have for all composite things are merely conventional designations; they are “empty” in the sense that they do not correspond to any really existing entities.

Early Buddhist texts contain a number of different formulae that represent attempts to analyze what we conventionally call the “self” into its really existing component parts, i.e. dharmas.

Two famous lists of dharmas, the five aggregates and eighteen elements, are referenced in the Heart Sūtra:

Five Aggregates:

1. form
2. sensation
3. appreciation
4. karmic predispositions
5. consciousness

eighteen elements

6 sense-organs:

eye

ear

nose

tongue

body

mind

6 sense-objects

forms

sounds

smells

tastes

touchables

objects of mind

6 sense-cognitions

seeing

hearing

smelling

tasting

touching

knowing

The word “dharma,” of course, also refers in a general way to “teachings of the Buddha”, which include numerous formulae that are not examples of dharma analysis in the aforementioned narrow sense. Two that are referenced in the Heart Sūtra are the twelve links of dependent co-arising and the four noble truths:

twelve links of dependent co-arising:

- 1) ignorance
- 2) karmic predispositions
- 3) consciousness
- 4) name and form
- 5) six sense objects
- 6) contact
- 7) sensation
- 8) desire
- 9) grasping
- 10) becoming
- 11) birth
- 12) old age and death

4 four noble truths

- 1) suffering
- 2) cause of suffering
- 3) cessation of suffering
- 4) path leading to cessation

THE MAHAYANA CRITIQUE OF EARLY BUDDHIST DHARMA THEORY

The Heart Sūtra embodies the Mahāyāna doctrine of emptiness, which holds that both “self” and “dharmas” are conceptual categories that are equally “empty” in the sense that they do not correspond to any really existing things.

Mahāyāna philosophers such as Nāgārjuna argued that the very definition of a dharma — an entity that possesses “own being” (i.e. is separate and indivisible) and yet arises and ceases in a nexus of cause and effect involving other dharmas — is logically self-contradictory, and that no such entities are attested empirically.

The concept of a dharma or “really existing thing,” in short, is nothing but a useful fiction. As convenient as it is to regard the world as a collection of static, independent entities interacting with one another in a causal nexus, in actuality no such “things” exist: “dharma” is an empty category.

This is the meaning of the expression found in the Heart Sūtra that reads, “All dharmas are characterized by emptiness”.

In other words, whatever “things” we think and speak of are nothing but arbitrary (albeit useful) mental constructs — distinctions that we draw for our own utilitarian purposes. However, existence itself — the “real world” — has an infinite complexity and fluidity that belies all of our conceptual and linguistic reifications.

An important corollary of the doctrine of emptiness is the doctrine of two truths: conventional truth, which pertains to “things” and is the level on which all human discourse takes place (including the teaching of emptiness itself); and ultimate truth which can be realized by the wise but never expressed in words without self-contradiction.

To speak of “the emptiness of all dharmas”, for example, is to point to the ultimate truth, but the statement itself is only true on the conventional level: ultimately, there are no such things as dharmas about which one can predicate emptiness, and no such thing as emptiness, either.

A grasp of ultimate truth depends on conventional truth, for it is simply the realization that language and conceptual thought can never get a handle on the real without distorting it in the process.

Ultimate truth, in other words, is not some “thing” that can be intuitively grasped or experienced in and of itself, prior to or apart from language; it is just a name for an insight into the inherent limitations and delusive (albeit useful) properties of language.

THE MESSAGE OF THE HEART SUTRA

The central argument of the Heart Sūtra is that, given the emptiness of the category “dharma” (“thing”), there are no such things as the “five aggregates,” “eighteen elements,” “twelve links of dependent co-arising,” or “four noble truths.”

By the same token, there is no such thing as “emptiness.” As the text states, “form is empty”, and “emptiness” is just another empty form.

To believe in the existence of dharmas (things) is to be caught up in “upside down views” and “dreamlike fantasies”, which are the “mental obscurations” that bring with them “fear” and “suffering” .

“Ultimate nirvāṇa”, the Heart Sūtra concludes, is attained when one no longer mistakenly grasps one’s own ideas (dharmas) about reality as an accurate description of reality in itself.

A TRANSLATION OF THE HEART SUTRA

Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva , when moving in the profound perfection of wisdom , clearly saw (shōken 照見) that the 1 five aggregates are all empty and thus relieved all suffering. Śāriputra, form does not differ from emptiness, and emptiness does not differ from form. "Form" is empty, and "emptiness" is a form. Sensation, apperception, karmic predispositions and consciousness are also like this.

Śāriputra, all dharmas are characterized by emptiness: they neither arise nor cease are neither defiled nor pure, neither increase nor decrease.

Therefore, given emptiness there is no 1 form no sensation, apperception, karmic predispositions, or consciousness; no 2 eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind; no forms; sounds, smells, tastes, touchables, or objects of mind; no realm of seeing, etc., up to no realm of mental consciousness.

There is no 3 ignorance and no extinction of ignorance, etc., up to no old age and death and no extinction of old age and death.

There is no 4 suffering, cause, cessation, or path. There is no knowledge and no attainment.

There being nothing that is attained, the bodhisattva relies on the perfection of wisdom, and thus the mind is without obscuration.

Because there is no obscuration there is no existence of fear.

To be utterly removed from all upside down views and dreamlike fantasies is the ultimate nirvaṇa.

All buddhas of the three periods rely on the perfection of wisdom and thus attain unsurpassed, true, perfect awakening.

Thus we know that the perfection of wisdom is a great spiritual mantra; it is a great magical mantra; it is the supreme mantra; it is the unequalled mantra, which can remove all suffering.

This is true, not false.



Thus I proclaim the perfection of wisdom mantra the mantra that goes as follows: "Gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha gya tei gya tei, hara gyatei, hara sō gyatei, boji sowaka " Heart Sūtra.

THE SANGHAFONDATORI MET ON THE FOLLOWING DATES:
FRIDAY APRIL 12
THURSDAY APRIL 25
FRIDAY MAY 31ST

Translation of texts by Daijōji Dayori from Japanese: Shinobu Nakagima,
Translations of the texts by the Bodhidharma from English: Eva Yōshin,
Translations of the texts by T. Griffith Foulk from English on the Heart Sutra: Laura Lō
Translation of EkiZen from Italian to English: Tenshin
Pictures: Fabio Daishin and Eva Yōshin,
Edits: Serena Goshin

CALENDAR OF MEETINGS FOR ZEN PRACTICE AT THE SHINNYO-JI SOTO ZEN TEMPLE OF FLORENCE:

Zazen – Three meetings per week: Monday evening from 8:00 to 10:00, Tuesday mornings from 6:30 to 7:30, Friday evening from 8:00 to 9:30.

Zazenkai – One Sunday per month from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Sesshin – One weekend per month from Friday evening at 8:00 to 2:00 Sunday afternoon.

The program for Practice retreats can be found on our site www.zenfirenze.it

Tempio Shinnyo-ji

Sede Italiana del Monastero di Daijō-ji di Kanazawa in Giappone

Via Vittorio Emanuele II n. 171 – 50134 Firenze

telefono +39 - 339 8826023

email: centro@zenfirenze.it

www.zenfirenze.it