

**EkiZen - Newsletter by the Shinnyoji Sangha**  
**Spring 2014 - n. 18 year V**



Spring has arrived in the Shinnyoji garden!



Teacher Shinnyo Roshi during the Ceremony

On March 11th, Shinnyoji commemorated the three year mark since the earthquake in Eastern Japan in 2011. A Zazen sitting was held in honor of the victims, beginning at the break of dawn, at the height of the meditation were twelve strikes on the large bell beginning at 6.46, as in all Sōtō Zen Temples all over the world. Afterwards, the Sangha stood for three minutes of silence which opened the Ritual Ceremony held by Teacher Shinnyo Roshi by reciting the Sutra and offering incense and ending with a blessing for a quick rebirth of the affected region. The ceremony was followed by the

usual Zazen held every Tuesday morning. The Ordained and other practitioners of Shinnyoji participated in the event, Ms. Yumiko Kishi sama, the daughter of the Abbot of Tōchikuin 東竹院 Temple joined as well.



Those who participated in the Ceremony

Reverend Shoki Kamada from the European Office of Sōtō Zen sent us the following email:

Reverend Shinnyo Roshi of the Shinnyoji Temple

Deep thanks to you and the Sangha of Shinnyoji for having celebrated the Hōyō Ceremony on the morning of March 11th. I would like to offer my most sincere greetings to all of those who participated.

Shoki Kamada in Gasshō

真如寺 真如様

このたびは法要をお勤めいただき誠に有難うございました。

御随喜いただいたみなさまにもよろしくお伝え頂きますと幸いです。

宜しくおねがいします。

曹洞宗ヨーロッパ国際布教総監部

釜田尚紀 合掌

## **Living our lives fully.**

Our spirit holds the entire Universe, that we can perceive when we go beyond our ego and false conscious of a separated self, we are established universally. The Zen Teacher Hakuin wrote, " People wander looking for red and yellow Scripture scrolls, digging through mountains of vile rubbish. It is only plucking another piece from the lily bulb."



A lily bulb is composed of many smaller bulbs or cloves, it does not have a central heart. The smaller pieces are themselves the heart.

Looking for wisdom through reading one Sutra after another or seeing and living a divided life, rather than living in a state of Unity, everything round, is like pulling off pieces of the bulb looking for the heart.

Sat in Zazen, in meditation, "completely letting the body and mind go, with all of your heart", we become One with the exhale and with the inhale and we can live in the world as it is. In this clear vision there is no self, no is there something other than the self, no effort of the mind to control itself or dominate others.

It is simply letting things go, fluidly, allowing everything to be ruled by the manifestation of the all-pervading Buddha Nature manifestation, that is a manifestation of ourselves. Until this Nature is realized, we must observe in depth, beyond the gaps in our minds, appearances and in the ideal world; acting and reacting; being aware: and at the same time observers and objects of observation. Practice evolves slowly, without judgement, without rigidity, with perseverance and rigor, "simply" participating with all of our hearts.

Every time the Practicing heart becomes less pure, a deaf egoism explodes from our judgmental and divided ego and is derived from separation that is contradicted, or imposed, to the Compassion of Wisdom, distancing itself from the other shore, that is nothing else.

**Rev. Anna Maria Iten Shinnyo**

Florence, 11 March 2014 Inter-religious meeting at Palazzo Vecchio



## **TESTIMONIES**

Dear Teacher,

I hope that you are having a good week so far and that the weather is nice in Florence. Here is my testimony for the upcoming Ekizen.

I do not know how to reflected on my practice. When I think about it, nothing really comes to mind, only little memories on whether or not I did samu, if I was distracted during my meditation, or if I have heard from the Teacher lately. The beautiful transformation that has occurred in me throughout my years of practice are manifested when I least expect them, or I notice them later. I no longer feel the joy, determination or epiphanies, instead, I just feel calm. I feel more peace in my everyday life and equanimity with the events and the people I meet. I no longer feel moments of pride when someone gives me a compliment and I feel less and less beaten down. It is not due to disinterest nor indifference but rather a great feeling of protection and faith that is deepening within myself, a feeling that I can only barely touch, it is impossible to hold or keep. I absolutely still have moments of anger, sadness, laziness, and egoism, but underneath all of this sea of superficial conditions, there is a firm ground upon which I walk happy and serene. Thank you to our Teacher who is always with and and my Sangha whom I really love. I hope to see you again soon.

Gasshō

**Tenshin**



Teacher,

These past few months of reflection have lead me to find a great unity in my life and my activities. As you teach, a monk dedicates his or her whole existence to serving and studying the Dharma, all in all every monk arrives with their own way of receiving the robes and in our Western condition, it cannot be found without completely and deeply embracing the traditional study of the Path.

Being a Western student with the privilege of living in this world, it has always been important to find harmony between the two sides of this life between studying and searching for the Dharma that is expressed in different ways. I'm not going to say that this is easy to do, it is difficult for us Westerners to sit cross-legged: children of a scientific and rational culture, we try to live according to our philosophy so far from that of the Japanese Buddhism.

Although these lectures and advice from the Teacher that she teaches us in her Kusens and Teishos, I understood on my own how it is possible to discover this deep unity that unites all human though, allowing even us Westerners to feel comfortable in such a distant culture like that of Japanese Zen, allowing us to practice our Path with great serenity and awareness.

In the spirit of deep unity in thought and life, it is very important for me to offer a few lines from a Western text as homage to Nehan, this texts guided me to this discovery, where with familiar words, you try to understand an experience that we all have:

*"In our self-seeing There, the self is seen as belonging to that order, or rather we are merged into that self in us which has the quality of that order. It is a knowing of the self restored to its purity. No doubt we should not speak of seeing; but we cannot help talking in dualities, seen and seer, instead of, boldly, the achievement of unity. In this seeing, we neither hold an object nor trace distinction; there is no two. The man is changed, no longer himself nor self-belonging; he is merged with the Supreme, sunken into it, one with it: centre coincides with centre, for on this higher plane things that touch at all are one; only in separation is there duality; by our holding away, the Supreme is set outside. This is why the vision baffles telling; we cannot detach the Supreme to state it; if we have seen something thus detached we have failed of the Supreme which is to be known only as one with ourselves.*

*But how comes the soul not to keep that ground? Because it has not yet escaped wholly: but there will be the time of vision unbroken, the self hindered no longer by any hindrance of body. Not that those hindrances beset that in us which has veritably*

*seen; it is the other phase of the soul that suffers and that only when we withdraw from vision and take to knowing by proof, by evidence, by the reasoning processes of the mental habit. This is the life of gods and of the godlike and blessed among men, liberation from the alien that besets us here, a life taking no pleasure in the things of earth, the passing of solitary to solitary.*

*The Enneads of Plotinus VI 9, 10-11."*

Gasshō

**Yūshin**



## **POETRY**

The Elegy Shukke

The poet of this edition is Daigū Ryōkan (1758-1831) whose name means "great fool, good and generous".

Some say that this monk lived in a cabin in the mountains for twenty years and is a figure comparable to San Francisco from Assisi, perhaps for the importance that Compassion held in his life. He was born in the port town Izumozaki, on the coast of the Sea of Japan. His father was a wealthy merchant and belonged to a samurai group, he was the village leader, a shinto priest and poet- Matsuo Bashō's student - he raised his child strictly according to Confucian ethics, he trustfully left his son in the care of Ōmori Shiyō, a famous teacher of the time in all of Japan.

The teachings he received left a profound impression on young Ryōkan, and made a solid base for this humanistic and literary education. Passionate student, inclined to introspection and solitude, because of his love of studying he was known as "the midday lamp".

Growing up he showed a total inadequacy to a career in administration, which seemed destined to him. He loved to be in company and drinking sakè, calm and happy when he was 18 years old, on July 18 1775, he made a sudden decision that surprised everyone, he left his parents' home and went to live in a Sōtō Zen Temple Koshoji.

The night before he had danced and drank sakè until morning, celebrating the Urabon holiday for the dead with his friends. It is said that before is sudden religious



conversion he had help the in the capital punishment of a thief; others say that hopelessly in love, and that one night he met up with his lover then left in the morning to shave his head... Whatever the reason was that prompted him towards the Temple, from that moment until his death he followed his own principles, even though he didn't immediately follow the monastic life style. He wrote about himself: "Many men first become monks and then practice Zen. But I practiced Zen for a long time, before becoming a monk." He stay at Koshoji for four years, always as a layman under the guidance of the young teacher Genjo Haryo. When he was 22 years old he met the famous teacher Kokusen Dainin and became his disciple in the Entsuji monastery where he practiced for 12 years until he finally received the Inka from him, recognizing the Dharma passage. He was 23 years old. In the Entsuji Temple he wrote poems, practiced calligraphy and every now and then allowed

himself a cup of sakè; his personality delicately and ironically depict the fidelity of his quite being, with innocent delights, but also express - with equal eloquence - all of the pain that he experienced: all of the premature deaths, the weariness of wandering and questioning, sickness.

The end of being a novice meant for Ryōkan, the beginning of a long pilgrimage and interior search that lasted five years. In 1796 he decided to come back to the country where he was born, where he spent eight year and where he realized that many of his affectionate elderly had passed away and his family was in debt.

In the end, Ryōkan in the Gogōan cloister, welcomed visitors, wrote poems, read Dōgen and the Chinese classics, he begged and stopped to play with the children in the nearby villages, until his old age and sickness kept him him from doing these things and he could no longer withstand living in the mountains during winter. He has to end over ten years of hermetic life and move to The Shinto Sanctuary in Otogo. In 1826, at 79 years of age, he moved to the village of Shimazaki to spend the last four years of his life in the midst of his people. "Coming back to the market" - according to the Zen parable of the Ten Tori - meaning amongst his people he gave his mature interior gifts from his long search. The young monk Teishin, with whom he shared his Buddhist studio and love for poetry, was an affectionate friend throughout his last years: with her Ryōkan spoke until his dying day through his usual language about the yearnings of his heart - poetic desires. He left a great poetic production that reflects the purity and simplicity of his life that he spent in solitude and poverty. He did not have any disciples. He played for hours with children and he forgot about himself in the Mushin state. He was amongst those who considered Zen a Path of detachment, abandoning the world, promised to refusing the sweetest passions of the human spirit in favor of a vaguely sullen dryness, they will be disappointed reading Ryōkan's poems in which the essence of the Buddha's teachings is translated in the heart of the author, who until his last heartbeat testified his own humanity.

The Elegy of a Shukke, is carved upon a stele in Izumozaki, Ryōkan's birth city and written in ancient Japanese.

良寛出家の歌碑

光照寺本堂の脇には渡辺秀英氏の筆による「出家の歌」碑がある。

うつせみは 常なきものと むら肝の 心におもひて 家を出で 憂からをはなれ 浮雲の  
雲のまにまに 行水の ゆくへもしらず 草枕  
旅ゆく時に たらちねの 母に別れを つげたれば 今はこの世の 名残とや 思ひましけむ 涙ぐみ  
手に手を取りて 我面を つくづくと見し おもかげは なほ目の前に あるごとし 父にいとまを  
こひければ 父がかたらく 世を捨てし すてがいなしと 世の人に いはるなゆめと いひしこと  
今も聞くごと 思ほえぬ

母が心の むつまじき その睦じき み心を はふらすまじと 思ひつぞ つねあはれみの こころもし  
浮世の人に むかひつれ  
父がことばの 厳くしき そのいつくしき み言葉を 思ひ出ては つかのまも のりの教を くださじと  
朝な夕なに いましめつ  
これの二つを 父母がかたみとなさむ わがいのち この世の中に あらむかぎりは

### Elegia di uno Shukke

Un giorno pensai che il mondo fosse mutevole  
e divenni shukke  
come le nuvole fluttuanti  
come l'acqua senza meta.  
Negli occhi ho ancora l'immagine  
quando dissi addio a mia madre,  
essa mi guardava  
stringendomi le mani,  
piangendo e sapendo che poteva essere l'ultima volta.  
Nelle orecchie ho ancora la voce di mio padre:  
"Vai ma non farti additare dalla gente per non essere un buon shukke!"  
Ricordando il cuore generoso di mia madre  
con Compassione mi ritrovo  
tra gli esseri di questo mondo.  
Ricordando l'affetto e la severità di mio padre  
mi affido alla Via  
da mane a sera mi ripeto di non disonorare neppure per un istante  
questi due insegnamenti.  
Finché avrò vita in questo mondo li manterrò  
Come ricordo dei miei genitori.



Our monk Yūshin working on careful stitches



Benshin careful and concentrated



The nimble hands of Rev. Dōsan



Shinden and Shinkai concentrated while sewing



### **At the Shinnyoji Temple in Florence**

Last February I had the honor of being invited to Shinnyoji during the Sesshin, sharing practice with a dear friend of mine, Rev. Shinnyo. The atmosphere at the Temple was pleasant and calm from the Friday afternoon when the practitioners arrive to prepare for the retreat.

On Saturday we sewed the kesas as for the Nyo-hō school, brought back to Japan by Teacher Kodo Sawaki and spread around Europe by Teacher Deshimaru.

The concentration required by every stitch is the solidity of Zazen concentration. More profound than any discussion is using your hands, the influence on your mind is immense. In silence, with the light of day reflecting off the black cloth, a dozen people were trying to do their best with the needle and thread, making one step forward...

I really loved the time I spent with the Sangha of the Buddha, that is always one. I thank Rev. Shinnyo and the Sangha in Florence for the opportunity that you have given me to practice with you.

### **Emanuela Dōsan Losi in gasshō**



Ei-shin engaged in practice

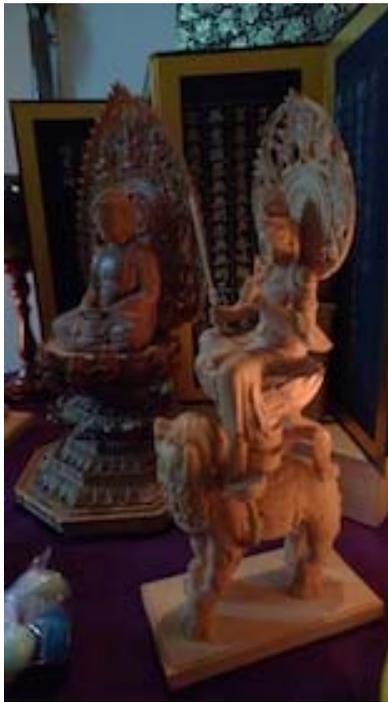
**Saturday February 15 (during Sesshin) at 9:00 p.m. Nehan-e was celebrated, the anniversary of the Shakyamuni Buddha entering Nirvana.**



Zazen before the Ceremony



Zenshin carrying the Dango, special sweets for Nehan that she lovingly prepared herself



The Shinnyoji altar with some Nehan sweets



Photo after the Sesshin

Throughout the Shessing on January 17-18-19 and the Zazenkai on 16 March, two Calligraphy lessons were held with Teachers Paola Billi and Nicola Piccioli teaching how to write the character Shin, meaning the heart of Za Zen, seated meditation. During the lessons, our Teacher, Shinnyo Roshi reminded us that in the Daijoji Monastery, a calligraphy teacher comes twice a month for Sho-dō, calligraphy lessons for all resident monks.



Shinnyo Roshi with the two Calligraphy Teachers, surrounded by students attending the lesson.



Michele, between perplexed and proud of his calligraphy



The character Shin, Heart



The final photo of the Zazenkaï, held on 16 March

## Zazenkai on March 1st, at Shinnyoji with the Finnish Sangha



Dear Teacher Shinnyo and Shinnyoji Sangha,

We would like to thank you for welcoming and hosting us during this special occasion, getting to stay at the Shinnyoji Temple.

Practicing with you, reciting the Sutras, sitting in Zazen and eating formal "Oroyki" meals with you was a great pleasure for us and an lovely experience. We would like to particularly express our gratitude for those to those who took care of us even under complicated circumstances, such as when our luggage was lost.

Thanks to Yushin and Michese for having stay with us for extra Zazen sessions. Thanks to Shinden, Daishin, and Chiara for having taken us to the airport, and Eishin for translating everything for us. Infinite thanks to the Tenzo who kindly cooked for us and thanks to Teacher Shinnyo for dedicating the time and energy to all of her teachings. This trip helped us understand how much the Way, in it's infinite manifestations, permeates everything. It was marvelous being able to reunite in one place two groups of people belonging to different traditions, both infinitely precious in their uniqueness.

We wish everyone the very best possible, also for your Practice.

Peace, love, freedom and compassion!

I hope to see you all in Finland someday!

A big hug,

**Anna, Ismo, Juha, Leena e Minna**



In the Zendo for the final photo after the Zazenkai, with Finnish friends



Dear Maestro Shinnyo and the Sangha of the Shinnyo-Ji

Many thanks for your warm hospitality during our stay at the Shinnyo-Ji Temple. It was a great pleasure and exciting experience to practice with you, to have a traditional Oryoki-ritual to resitate suttras and practice zazen together. Particular thanks for you great efforts taking care of our well being in surprising occasions that came on the way, like a late bag :) Thank you You-Shin and Michele for assisting the extra zazen, and helping us with the transportation, like also Dai-Shin, Chiara and Shin-Den. Thank you Eshin for assisting in translations and everyone who made us feel at ease. We were taken care of. Many thanks also for the Tensho's for excellent meals and Master Shinnyo to her time, effort and teaching. This trip was a good reminder how the way is immeasurable and all pervading, and has infinite manifestations. It was wonderful to have two traditions to sit together, everyone at his or her place, each different and each as infinitely valuable and unique. We all wish you all everything good to your lives and practice, peace and love, freedom and compassion! Perhaps we see you in Finland!  
A Big hug for everyone

**Anna, Ismo, Juha, Leena and Minna.**



The Ordinary Mind Sangha visit was very special.

Ismo finally came back and brought some new practicing friends with him. The Zendo was full of people, we were surrounded by a rich silence while sitting in Zazen together. Also the Tenzoryo at lunch prepared a long lunch table for many of us to eat using bowls. The Teacher happily announced that there have never been this many people sitting together for Oryoki. It was a joyful event to eat together, so closely, even if Oryoki always reminds us of our small mistakes and distractions, where are we?

After an intense day, we were lucky to have met up with Ismo and his friends on the bus taking them to the city center for dinner at a traditional restaurant. It was really nice having time to talk with him. I carefully listened to him, as the bus rattled, about his passionate life with the Ordinary Mind Sangha, about his everyday life in Finland, and refreshed love for Zazen, about his family and children, his studies. He was a friend again, a companion as always, even if just for a short period of time, a quick hello.

Dear Ismo, friend of practice, even if you are far away in the cold of Finland, that has now melted, you are always close in our hearts.

Gasshō

**Benshin**



### **An Ugly Duckling and other Myths**

Distressing, in the past few months at the Temple, trying to play not elegant sounds, but at least decent sounding from the wooden board Moppan.

It is inevitable to compare yourself to who was luckier at making the wooden sound of the instrument from the very first strikes. The wooden hammer, in your hand, betrayed by insecurity, hesitation and distraction, even when I tried to protect and hide these emotions under a layer of martially forceful aggressive and annoying strikes.

Frustrating attempts to recompose in my repertoire of strikes, a collage of percussionist virtue for others: the strategy of an ego in search of consistency.

Not to mention the breath- completely absent in my attempts as a Zen percussionist.

An Ugly Duckling on the waves of an unsettled lake.

And slowly, forgiving myself and breathing, lowering my knees into a more relaxed posture, unlike the previous rigid and untruthful wooden Pinocchio-like interior, the Moppan wood began to respond and resonate more and more with my heart, with the Sangha and the Temple.

The sound is still transforming and evolving today, towards somewhere I do not know, but always resonating with the essence of the moment that I am living and in the world around me. I feel it today and recognize it, I trust this evolution.

Two recent experiences in practicing in the Temple have brought me to revive the interior path felt with the Moppan:

The first was my experience with Calligraphy, I still vividly remember the feelings, fear, responsibility and inhibition before the clean paper. My trembling hands holding the brush. Stiffness in my posture and blocked breath while moving. Shyness and awkwardness preparing the ink, being present in just the right way along the universal energy of the paper. A tsunami of emotions, compressed my stomach and chest, betrayed by the uncontrollable tremble of the painted symbol. The stickiness of the ink, now locked onto the piece of paper, making any change in direction with the brush difficult. Also in this practice, I have seen many images of myself manifest themselves, many judgements, many interior voices, mostly negative ones have resonated.

Karimero, the block gosling fallen into black ink, my mind and feelings abandon me...

I remember, like now, what to do...

Remembering my experience with the Moppan, I try to abandon myself to the flow of changes, I admit many time, when I was young and didn't know how to play enthusiastically, and so much less, still today, how little I let myself paint the world around me without a tinge of perfectionism. I feel this increase in self-criticism on my fluidity, and allow me to dare, tracing more intimate lines on the paper, like models of observation but at the same time, expressing character and energy. The uncountable times leaving the body and mind...

The first chakra is found on the floor in order to find the courage to put the brush on the paper. The second liberated, expanding emotions. The movement of the brush aligns the light and darkness of the others, bringing together their intension and movement. The fourth resonates enthusiasm in the heart for the sangha: we play like children observing and complementing others with the extraordinary unity of self-portrait in the symbols drawn on our own paper. The fifth, takes ownership of the work, recognizing the truth that is created and that assumes verbal and material responsibility.



Glimpses of intuition on small particularities in calligraphy shoot as quick as an arrow through the eye of the sixth.

A dance of the chakras; a game-work is revealed.

Each time it will be different. Certainly infinite. It is a meditation toward disidentification, the seventh chakra, beyond the ego, on the white paper.

Finally, the sewing experience, how much the series of fixed punctures with the needle into the cloth resembles the imprecision of the unequal steps and disorientation that we encounter on our path?

How much I do not follow the rules on who to track the point, by not listening, by the rush to react and not paying attention?

How much inconsistency is possible in every second?

How much I prick and hurt myself with the

tools that are given to me?

Lastly, the story of the Japanese Ghosts, how many things I am discovering about myself and my own senses with this limitless powerful meditation represented by sewing your own Rakusu??

I discover my eyes, slightly astigmatic, creating the constant hallucination of a double line rather than single, this hallucination that distorts and makes me insecure of my own sewing that is becoming stronger and more uncontrolled, just as the thread is becoming clearer and brighter upon the black cloth upon which I am working.

Will I ever learn to be different in my everyday and interior life, or remain victim to this double-sighted hallucination circumventing the unity of all things? One more time, abandoning judging expectations and behavior, accepting to be without assured reference points, welcoming imperfection and waywardness, breathing and exercising, slowly the sewing life is becoming better organized compared to the first stitches; mostly after having gained the awareness of these characteristics in my sight. Once again, as the "mind" tool, the "sight" tool, experiencing imperfection, remains the only things that I can trust in order to sew. The aspect of the Dharma in the practice of

sewing shyly faces perception, offering the opportunity to consolidate with will, patience, attention and perseverance. Last of all, curiosity and faith toward this practice, allow the desire to continue with it.

Gasshō

### **Daishin**



### **TO BE**

We are alone, we are everything.

Our mental continuum continuously weaves, is influenced, modified but doesn't stop- it can't stop the shared experiences, the feelings that we have provoked.

In this form, in this existence, as in the others, we evolve and develop based on our intentions and dependent mutations, but we cannot crystallize anything.

Everything is subject to arise dependently and exactly for this reason it is not destined to remain. It leaves a trace, a mark but not its identity as it is always evolving. That lasts forever. The rivers of existence that flow within the ocean of the absolute are infinite, and there, as water in water, they disappear. Like water in water we lose our presumed identities to become one. We uselessly force ourselves to identify ourselves, to find unchangeable differences that will make ourselves unique, that will distinguish us forever. Once "found" we use them to construct our reality based on a system of regular interactions by our presumed uniqueness. In this way we hastily attempt to freeze them into something we interact with, to direct experiences and to crystallize the results with our goal of creating a reality, an existential logic, an evolutionary path. The goal is to create something to leave behind, a perpetual testimony of our passage through this existence. We must leave something: a well-behaved child as we want, a business, a fortune, an immortal work. We desperately want to belong and we want to find someone who belongs to us.

We are alone, we are everything.

### **Ei-shin**



I open my eyes, I see myself, a weeping willow, leaves...  
Shinden



Mio, our neighbor's cat, hangs out with us in the garden



A mosquito in the Zendo, in Zazens with us.

**THE TEACHINGS OF BODHIDHARMA**  
**Chapter IV – The Awakening Sermon**

<p>事云何一者淨水二者燒火三者澡豆四者楊枝五者淨灰六者蘇臍七者內衣以此七法喻於七事一切眾生由此七法沐浴莊嚴能除毒心無明垢穢其七法者一者謂淨戒洗蕩備非猶如淨水濯諸塵垢二者智慧觀察內外猶如然火能溫淨水三者分別簡棄諸惡猶如澡豆能淨垢膩四者眞實斷諸妄想如嚼楊枝能淨口氣五者正信決定無疑猶如淨灰摩身能辟諸風六者謂柔和忍辱猶如蘇臍通潤皮膚七者謂慚愧悔諸惡業猶如內衣遮醜形體如上七法是經中秘密之義如來當爾爲諸大乘利根者說非爲小智下劣凡夫所以今人無能解悟其溫室者卽身是也所以燃智慧火</p>
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[Table 16]

The first of these seven is morality, which washes away excess just as water washes away dirt.

Second is wisdom, which penetrates subject and object, just as fire warms water.

Third is discrimination, which gets rid of evil practices, just as soap gets rid of grime.

Fourth is honesty, which purges delusions, just as chewing willow catkins purifies the breath.

Fifth is true faith, which resolves all doubts, just as rubbing pure ashes on the body prevents illnesses.

Sixth is patience, which overcomes resistance and disgrace, just as ointment softens the skin. And seventh is shame, which redresses evil deeds, just as the inner garment covers up an ugly body. These seven represent the real meaning of the sutra. When he spoke this sutra, the Tathagata was talking to farsighted followers of the Mahayana, not to narrow-minded people of dim vision. It's not surprising that people nowadays don't understand.

溫淨戒湯沐浴身中眞如佛性受持七法以自莊嚴當 爾比丘聰明上智皆悟聖意如說修行功德成就俱登 聖果今時眾生莫測其事將世間水洗質礙身自謂依 經豈非誤也且眞如佛性非是凡形煩惱塵垢本來無 相豈可將質礙水洗無爲身事不相應云何悟道若欲 身得淨者當觀此身本因貪欲不淨所生莫礙驕闕內 外充滿若也洗此身求於淨者猶如塗塗盡方淨以此 驗之明知洗外非佛說也	問經說言至心念佛必得往生西方淨土以此一門卽 應成佛何假觀心求於解脫答夫念佛者當須正念了 義爲正不了義爲邪正念必得往生邪念云何達彼佛
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[Table 17]

The bathhouse is the body. When you light the fire of wisdom, you warm the pure water of the precepts and bathe the true Buddha nature within you. By upholding these seven practices you add to your virtue. The monks of that age were perceptive. They understood the Buddha's meaning. They followed his teaching, perfected their virtue, and tasted the fruit of Buddhahood. But people nowadays can't fathom these things. They use ordinary water to wash a physical body and think they're following the sutra. But they're mistaken. Our true buddha-nature has no shape. And the dust of affliction has no form. How can people use ordinary water to wash an intangible body? It won't work. When will they wake up? To clean such a body you have to behold it. Once impurities and filth arise from desire, they multiply until they cover you inside and out. But if you try to wash this body of yours, you have to scrub until it's nearly gone before it's clean. From this you should realize that washing something external isn't what the Buddha meant.

The sutras say that someone who wholeheartedly invokes the Buddha is sure to be reborn in the Western Paradise. Since the door leads to Buddhahood, why seek liberation in beholding the mind?

If you're going to invoke the Buddha, you have to do it right. Unless you understand what invoking means, you'll do it wrong. And if you do it wrong, you'll never go anywhere.

者覺也所謂覺察身心勿令起惡念者憶也所謂憶持	戒行不忘精進勤了如是義名爲念故知念在於心不	在於言因筌求魚得魚忘筌因言求意得意忘言既稱	念佛之名須知念佛之道若心無實口誦空名三毒內	臻人我填臆將無明心不見佛徒爾費功且如誦之與	念義理懸殊在口曰誦在心曰念故知念從心起名爲	覺行之門誦在口中卽是音聲之相執相求理終無是	處故知過去諸聖所修皆非外說唯只推心卽心是眾	善之源卽心爲萬德之主涅槃常樂由息心生三界輪	迴亦從心起心是一世之門戶心是解脫之關鍵知門	戶者豈慮難成知關鍵者何憂不達竊見今時淺識唯
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[Table 18]

Buddha means awareness, the awareness of body and mind that prevents evil from arising in either. And to invoke means to call to mind, to call constantly to mind the rules of discipline and to follow them with all your might. This is what's meant by invoking. Invoking has to do with thought and not with language. If you use a trap to catch fish, once you succeed you can forget the trap. And if you use language to find meaning, once you find it you can forget language. To invoke the Buddha's name you have to understand the Dharma of invoking. If it's not present in your mind, your mouth chants an empty name. As long as you're troubled by the three poisons or by thoughts of yourself, your deluded mind will keep you from seeing the Buddha and you'll only waste your effort. Chanting and invoking are worlds apart, Chanting is done with the mouth. Invoking is done with the mind. And because invoking comes from the mind, it's called the door to awareness. Chanting is centered in the mouth and appears as sound. If you cling to appearances while searching for meaning, you won't find a thing. Thus, sages of the past cultivated introspection and not speech. This mind is the source of all virtues. And this mind is the chief of all powers, The eternal bliss of nirvana comes from the mind at rest. Rebirth in the three realms also comes from the mind. The mind is the door to every world and the mind is the ford to the other shore. Those who know where the door is don't worry about reaching it. Those who know where the ford is don't worry about crossing it.

知事相爲功廣費財寶多傷水陸妄營像塔虛促人夫
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達磨大師破相論終

[Table 19]

The people I meet nowadays are superficial. They think of merit as something that has form. They squander their wealth and butcher creatures of land and sea. They foolishly concern themselves with erecting statues and stupas, telling people to pile up lumber and bricks, to paint this blue and that green. They strain body and mind, injure themselves and mislead others. And they don't know enough to be ashamed. How will they ever become enlightened?

They see something tangible and instantly become attached. If you talk to them about formlessness, they sit there dumb and confused. Greedy for the small mercies of this world, they remain blind to the great suffering to come. Such disciples wear themselves out in vain. Turning from the true to the false, they talk about nothing but future blessings.

If you can simply concentrate your mind's Inner Light and behold its outer illumination, you'll dispel the three poisons and drive away the six thieves once and for all. And without effort gain possession of an infinite number of virtues, perfections, and doors to the truth, Seeing through the mundane and witnessing the sublime is less than an eye-blink away, Realization is now. Why worry about gray hair? But the true door is hidden and can't be revealed. I have only touched upon beholding the mind.



## **Numbers**

Today, the 20th of March I turn 51 years old.

I had my first Sesshin when I was 26.

My first practice without guidance at 19.

I first met Shinnyo Roshi when I was 7.

I hope to walk along with my Teacher for many many more years.

It doesn't matter at what "level" or why.

In silence, sat upon my zafu, "sitting with whatever there is".

Silent testimony of an act of love that is passed down from generations.

Trying not to show anything or "leave a footprint".

Breath after breath, welcoming and embracing every pain and every smile, without choosing.

The weariness of my karma, without looking behind or ahead.

Now is everything.

Gasshō

## **Shinkai**



### **Practice retreats**

Zazenkai: 1 March; 16 March

Sesshin: 17-18-19 January; 14-15-16 February

During every retreat our teacher Shinnyo Roshi holds a Teisho on the Precepts, in preparation for new ordinations.

Photos by *Fabio Daishin*

Edited by *Giancarlo Shinkai*

Translated to English by *Tenshin*



### **Calendar of meetings for Zen Practice:**

**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.