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From the Vimalakirti Sutra, Chapter 4

Then, the Buddha said to the bodhisattva Maitreya, "Maitreya, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

Maitreya replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember that one day I was engaged in a conversation with the gods of the Tusita heavens, the god Samtusita and his retinue, about the stage of nonregression of the great Bodhisattvas. At that time, the Licchavi Vimalakirti came there and addressed me as follows:

"Maitreya, the Buddha has prophesied that only one more birth stands between you and unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. What kind of birth does this prophecy concern, Maitreya? Is it past? Future? Or present? If it is a past birth, it is already finished. If it is a future birth, it will never arrive. If it is a present birth, it does not abide.

For the Buddha has declared, "Bhikshus, in a single moment, you are born, you age, you die, you transmigrate, and you are reborn."

"Then might the prophecy concern birthlessness? But birthlessness applies to the stage of destiny for the ultimate, in which there is neither prophecy nor attainment of perfect enlightenment.

"Therefore, Maitreya, is your reality from birth? Or is it from cessation? Your reality as prophesied is not born and does not cease, nor will it be born, nor will it cease. Furthermore, your reality is just the same as the reality of all living beings, the reality of all things, and the reality of all the holy ones. If your enlightenment can be prophesied in such a way, so can that of all living beings. Why? Because reality doesn't consist of duality or diversity. Maitreya, wherever

you attain Buddhahood, which is the perfection of enlightenment, at the same time all living beings will also attain Buddhahood. Why? Enlightenment consists of the realizations of all living beings. Maitreya, when you attain ultimate liberation, all living beings will also attain ultimate liberation. Why? The Tathagatha do not enter ultimate liberation until all living beings have entered ultimate liberation. For, since all living beings are utterly liberated, the Tathagatha see them as having the nature of ultimate liberation.

"Therefore Maitreya, do not fool and delude these deities! No one abides in, or regresses from, enlightenment. Maitreya, you should introduce these deities to the repudiation of all discriminative constructions concerning enlightenment.

"Enlightenment is perfectly realized neither by the body nor by the mind. Enlightenment is the eradication of all marks. Enlightenment is free of presumptions concerning all objects. Enlightenment is free of the functioning of all intentional thoughts. Enlightenment is the annihilation of all convictions. Enlightenment is free from all discriminative constructions. Enlightenment is free from all vacillation, mentation, and agitation. Enlightenment is not involved in any commitments. Enlightenment is the arrival at detachment, through freedom from all habitual attitudes. The ground of enlightenment is the ultimate realm. Enlightenment is realization of reality; enlightenment abides at the limit of reality. Enlightenment is without duality, since therein are no minds and no things. Enlightenment is equality, since it is equal to infinite space. Enlightenment is unconstructed, because it is neither

born nor destroyed, neither abides nor undergoes any transformation. Enlightenment is the complete knowledge of the thoughts, deeds, and inclinations of all living beings. Enlightenment is not a door for the six media of sense. Enlightenment is unadulterated since it is free of the passions of the instinctually driven succession of lives. Enlightenment is neither somewhere nor nowhere, abiding in no location or dimension. Enlightenment, not being contained in anything, does not stand in reality. Enlightenment is merely a name and even that name is unmoving. Enlightenment, free of abstention and undertaking, is energyless. There is no agitation in enlightenment, as it is utterly pure by nature. Enlightenment is radiance, pure in essence. Enlightenment is without subjectivity and completely without object. Enlightenment, which penetrates the equality of all things, is undifferentiated. Enlightenment, which is not shown by an example, is incomparable. Enlightenment is subtle, since it is extremely difficult to realize. Enlightenment is all-pervasive as it has the nature of infinite space. Enlightenment cannot be realized, either physically or mentally. Why? The body is like grass, trees, walls, paths, and hallucinations. And the mind is immaterial, invisible baseless, and unconscious."

'Lord, when Vimalakirti had discoursed thus, two hundred of the deities in that assembly attained the tolerance of birthlessness. As for me, Lord, I was rendered speechless. Therefore, I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness."

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The Reluctance of the Buddhas, Chapter Number Four.

In the previous chapter, the Buddha was requesting his ten top disciples to visit the ailing Vimalakirti and was refused by each of them. Each one gave a reason for turning down the request. This time the Buddha begins to ask the Bodhisattvas, since all of his ten top disciples had turned him down. The first of these is Maitreya, or Miroku Bodhisattva. In the Buddha's later years he spoke about Maitreya saying, "Those who are bound for the heavens, all of the humans and heavenly beings are liberated there. Those whom I have wanted to liberate, the gods of the heavenly realms as well and humans, I have saved them all. I have saved everyone I could and should liberate. For those who are not yet liberated I have left behind the karmic connection to their becoming liberated. I have done completely what I have had to do. I did what I was supposed to do and since there is something left to be done, those who are left will take care of that. In this world I have no regrets."

The Buddha said this at the end of his life. "After I die, my many disciples, one after another, will continue. If they continue transmitting the truth and giving life to their training, even if my body is gone, the Dharma Body of the Tathagatha will be living forever. If the Dharma does not decay I will be living right there. Those who see the Dharma will see me, and those who see me will be seeing the Dharma. In this way, the Buddha taught and spoke. His final way of liberating all beings remaining was Maitreya Bodhisattva. To put it another way, each and every one of us must be Maitreya.

The Buddha said that 5,670,000,000 years following his death Maitreya will be realized in this world and liberate those who have not yet been liberated by him. It was prophesied that Maitreya would be the Buddha of the next age.

Maitreya was the bodhisattva that the Buddha promised to send to the world in the following age, and even now in the Tusita heavens, Maitreya continues training for all beings. Maitreya was asked to go to Vimalakirti by the Buddha and he turned down the request. "I can't go there. The reason is from ancient times. When the gods of the Tusita heavens gathered, I was teaching the practice of the nonreturner. This teaching of the nonreturner is a very traditional, well-debated and often-taught doctrine. The one who does not return has achieved a very advanced stage of training. In Buddhism, the state of mind one has acquired, to throw that away and leave that state of mind of satori behind, this is the world of people who live the precepts and are often mentioned in the sutras. If we do zazen even a little, we know this state of mind

well. When we sit silently we think, "How quiet it can become."

We are always living in a mind full of noise and extraneous thoughts. When we finally become quiet in mind, we feel this deeply. However, we return to society and meet many in the world and our very carefully realized quieted mind becomes upset. We get insecure and unstable. Our trained mind, which we worked so hard for, goes right back to where it was, insecure and upset over some small thing. We all have a version of this happen, I think. In the olden days, I was thinking that the nonreturner seemed like something on top of a cloud – a very, very far away state of mind. Traditionally for Buddhism, the 6 Paramitas were always practiced. These teach strong practice, and the Buddha taught in the Yuikyogyo Sutra that there is nothing we cannot realize if we make sincere and deep efforts. The Buddha taught even to his end, just like a mother going away on a trip who so thoroughly and carefully is telling her children how to behave while she is gone away. He taught about the state of mind of the nonreturner like he was chewing it and digesting it for them. "All of you must not slacken your efforts in any part of daily life! If you keep it going all day without upsetting your mind then in one life you will follow that direction of true mind and true character, if you don't put in extraneous thinking and unnecessary thoughts, then no matter how difficult it is, without fail, even without your knowing it, the essence will be abundantly fulfilled.

You must not cease in your constant, focused application. Even a small bit of water falling one drop at a time, such as water dripping from the eaves onto a stone below, wears away the stone drop by drop. If each time you look away from that and instead say to yourself, "Oh I wish it was like this", or "Oh why can't it be just like that" it will be put far away, the essence will get diluted and you'll let go of it all completely. It is just like making a spark with two sticks. We rub the sticks together and keep rubbing without stopping to get the heat that can then bring forth a spark. Then finally, with the friction of the sticks rubbing against each other, there will be smoke and the spark will come forth and start the paper scraps burning and a fire can be built. If you do it but are always stopping and resting, no matter how great a deep vow you have, the goal will not be able to be realized. To do it without ceasing and keep the efforts going all the way to completion is what is called making true efforts. This is the paramita of deep effort.

This is what the Buddha always taught. People are often seeking the path with a deep sincere mind and a deep vow; this beginners mind must not be forgotten. In each day's efforts, the activity and the doctrine are both present. We must put ourselves completely into the form of each day's efforts, expression and correct

order, the essence of the path being put ahead of everything else in what we do. We must not cease in the efforts of our daily life in every single mind moment. There are those who chant the Buddha's name, and those who keep it going in their daily life, not by chanting a name or doing zazen all day, but by making our work our zazen. This is how essence has to be sustained.

Honen Shonin said that one does not do the chanting of the Buddha's name only when one can find free time after one's work, but that it must be done in the very midst of one's work. Then one becomes the chanting of the Buddha's name; the work itself is the chanting. He realized it this way himself. In one day, he would chant it 40000 times. Chanting the Buddha's name, how many times can it be done in an hour? Someone researched this long ago by putting a grain of rice aside each time the Buddha's name was chanted, and found that 5000 grains of rice were gathered in one hour. So even if you do it wholeheartedly, in one hour it can be done 5000 times, so to chant 40000 times in one day that means that 1/3 of the day the Buddha's name is not separating from one's mouth. This is the realization of the doctrine in daily life, the continuous mind moments of deepest clarity, so that in one whole day we don't think anything extra from morning to night, from night to morning.

This is very, very difficult. It has been said that to think nothing at all is the state of mind of the Buddha, but to sustain that in every single nen is very difficult to do. We do zazen planning to sit and think about nothing at all, but one mind moment after the next things come and depart, with the thoughts continually coming and going. This is not the state of continuous clear mind moments. The way of chanting the Buddha's name is even easier to do, perhaps. For example, even if we don't do it with our mouth we do it with our whole bodies. People of training do it with their koans, the questions given by the people of old that realized satori. Making this our own personal challenge and while concentrating all day long on the koan, we gather our mind into one, keeping it concentrated on this koan. During that concentration, there are no delusions or confusion coming forth. With our whole body and mind, we do the Nembutsu or chanting of the Buddha's name; with our whole body and mind, we do our koan. The essence of this brings our mind to clarity. There is no crack for those desires and extraneous thoughts to enter or stick to us. To do it while looking around thinking about all kinds of other things, that kind of zazen has no meaning at all. With that kind of lukewarm way of doing it, there will be no essence developing at all. That which is deepened already will all leak out and seep away. This is very important to see clearly.

The ancients said that one mind moment would even pass through a rock. The strength of our determined thoughts and firmed direction, if they are deep and intense, makes it so that to recite the Buddha's name 40000, or even 60000 times, becomes so important that you can't sleep if you don't do it. We have to repeat the Buddha's name with this kind of deep determination, to focus attentively on our koan with this kind of intensity and commitment. Then, no matter what deep desires we have within our minds, they can't come forth, and no matter what temptation we may face outside, it can't come forth either. There is no crack for it to enter.

It is just like the people of old who went to war with a shield to protect themselves. There is a huge difference in going into war with or without a shield. The arrows fly and many swords swing at us. If we have a shield, then the arrows and the swords cannot pierce through. Our daily efforts cannot be merely conceptual, but must be expressions of our own truth. If we have to clarify and feel deeply that we must do that, then we have to have clear mind moments and not let extraneous thinking in; that has to be our truth and practice. To not let go of the deep determination we had as a beginner, to deepen our firm vow's commitment and not let it slip away. Each person's truth is to do this wholeheartedly and keep it going as far as we possibly can.

In the Mumonkan, this is very meticulously elaborated. "You must burn completely with this *mu* using all of your 360 bones and joints and 84,000 pores, making your whole body into one great burning Mu."

From night until morning and from morning until night you have to become this completely. From the top of our head to the bottom of our feet, with every bit of our body and our mind, we must gather and throw it all into being this. We have to do our koan in this way with this kind of energy. Mu is only a word or some letters lined up, but into that we throw everything to the point of not knowing if we are the mu or the mu is us. The separation disappears completely. That essence is exactly like having swallowed a burning red-hot iron ball. We can't spit it out and we can't swallow it down. In all the twenty-four hours of the day, we continue until there is no separation whatsoever between what is external and what is internal; it is a state of mind like a person who cannot speak trying to tell their dream. It is as if we had a red-hot iron ball in our mouths and we are in the situation of not being able to swallow it or spit it out, we must continue with that kind of intensity and determination and keep it going.

People have so many various experiences, so many things they take refuge in, so many memories of the past. We have to let go of all of that, to no longer feel any need to be associated with all of that. Instead,

we need to be in the very midst of our deepest interior and become absorbed in our interior and realize the place where we extend throughout the heavens and earth as one single layer. This is the state of mind of being a person who is mute and can't tell his or her dream. We understand very well but we cannot communicate this state of mind to anyone else. This essence can't be expressed. We have realized this place where our state of mind cannot be known in any conceptual way because it is beyond any dualistic perception, in that place where all past history and superficial knowledge and social conditioning is let go of completely. This is what it is to directly encounter our true nature.

To study the way is to study the self

To study the self is to forget the self

To forget the self is to be enlightened by all things

To be enlightened by all things is to remove the barrier between self and other

As Dogen Zenji has said, and as the Buddha said as well, "Disciples, you must find refuge unto yourself, you must find the light unto yourself. Do not look outside yourselves for refuge, do not look outside yourselves for the light. Look to the Dharma for the truth and light, look to the Dharma for your refuge."

Buddhism as a religion is about the mind, which is equal in all beings and all nature. It guides us to awaken to this, to encounter it directly. Being clearly revealed, we come to know that true bright radiance which all humans have within as their refuge. To perceive, encounter and experience this is Buddhism.

People who only hear a lot about zazen may think that Zen is not kind and is even violent. But we are realizing that true human character with which all beings are endowed. We keep putting many layers of kimono on this true character. On it, we put the kimono of ego, and stick on many external decorations. We guard it with the defenses of conditioned knowledge, past experiences, and dualistic views. We are all thickly covering over this true human character. Zazen is not for doing something to satisfy that ego either, nor for making something or recognizing that ego kindly. People frequently make this mistake. That essence is very difficult to see and instead we are often strengthening the ego and from that, there will be no true direct encounter with our pure true nature.

In the Jodo Shinshu Gyo Shinshu it is written, "This mind is, as it is, a great Bodhisattva mind." Even those who believe in liberation by chanting the Nembutsu believe that it is not the truth that we should get to heaven as soon as possible by reciting the Buddha's name. The real person of the truth is one who, no

matter what comes along does not become turbulent and twisted, but maintains the mind like a diamond. This mind is that which, no matter what and no matter when, HAS to realize the clear mind of purity and truth.

We have always been born to do this and to believe in it. So what is it we can believe in? We are all endowed with this karmic connection to the original mind: the knowledge of deep determination to realize the true mind uniting all people and the burning passionate vow that we must all awaken to this true mind. Therefore, we determine to realize this mind and are committed to liberating all beings without exception. No matter what, we offer everything we have and everything we are to society and put our whole lives on the line for this. To be definite and certain in our determination to clarify our mind is our offering to the liberation of all beings. This is how it has to be and that is the essence of the Buddha Dharma.

It is not about defending our exterior appearance and our position. It is not about thinking, "We have desires, so it is ok to have desires." If we settle for that, there will be no realizing the truth for all beings, instead thinking we are fine just as we are. If we stop here, then the essence of liberating all, the truth of all people, will never be realized.

As the poem of Bankei Zenji puts it, to realize it completely is like the old barrel held together by three hoops, when the bottom falls out completely. It is just like an old barrel for pickle making which is tipped over in the corner of the storage room. Just because it is dirty and smelly, all moldy and rotten and plastered with stuck-on damp leaves and mouse turds and who knows what else, it seems absolutely useless to anyone. Our human mind is the same—all full of thoughts of what is good and bad and our past experiences and our life's history. Our mind is full to brimming and overflowing, from one corner to the other. Like being filled with rotten gas, we are full of desires and malevolent intentions. The reason that all of this can stay in the barrel is because it has a bottom. If that bottom were to completely fall out and drop away at some point, then the rings that hold it together would fall off, leaving only the boards. In exactly the same way, our attached love, egoistic desires, and meaningless thoughts continue because of the ego which holds them together, keeping them going and staying attached to them. When that ego with its deep roots is cut completely, all of our history, life experience, and conditioning scatter and fall away. Following that, there is only round, empty, pure space, our true and bright nature. Even the boards aren't left. Nothing is left whatsoever, and it must not be left, either. Not even an idea of a pure human nature can remain, says Bankei Zenji.

As it says in the poem *Believing in Mind*, "In the Great all-embracing mind, there is nothing extra and nothing missing. Even if we meet a Buddha there is nothing extra there, even if we encounter an ignorant person there is nothing missing." The great mind is round and eternal, like the circle of the barrel ring that is used as a metaphor for where there is nothing within it whatsoever. However, no matter what else, if we don't break through the ego, the bottom of the barrel, the clear mind will not be revealed. Until we can pierce through by sitting and sitting and sitting with full determination, or cutting and cutting and cutting until that breaks through or chanting and chanting and chanting the Buddha's name until that bottom falls out. It has to be done to this point, or even if we seek and chase after the truth, it will not be actually realized and fulfilled.

"My death has been taken away from me by Amida, my death is finished, my dying done, only the joy remaining 'Namu Amida Butsu'" as Asahara Saichi said in his poem.

This state of mind will not be realized until the whole bottom has been broken through. Chio says: "Perceiving the old barrel's rotten bottom breaking through, it was so weak that it can't hold water, but now you can see the moon through it." Old Chio of Tadano expresses his great joy of external and physical desires all being cleared out with the bottom falling out of the barrel. This essence has to be tasted or our true nature, that which unites all beings, will not be realized. While being endowed with this essence, we cannot let go of the collected ego view that is such a persistent bottom. It is hard and fixed and stuck and keeps us from knowing the true nature.

Bankei Zenji often said everyone who came on a particular day came to hear him speak. And so, of course, his talk would enter their ears. However, nobody came here planning to hear the dog barking outside. Yet everyone hears that bowwow, even if they don't intend to and don't make efforts to. They hear that without hesitation, and that is Buddha mind and our original true human nature. Just as Bankei Zenji said, our mind hears the dog's bark because we are empty and without plan. From that empty mind, coming from nowhere at all, we hear that dog's barking or feel that sharp pain and say "ouch!" We experience these from nowhere at all. We feel joy and pain and sadness, and we are truly innocent and clear in our simple pure mind and original nature. In fact, there is nothing there at all, and from that nothing, everything is born and comes forth. This is what we are being taught here.

At another time in the *Vimalakirti Sutra* it is said, "Licchavi Vimalakirti came there and addressed me as follows:

'Maitreya, the Buddha has prophesied that only one more birth stands between you and unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. What kind of birth does this prophecy concern, Maitreya? Is it past? Is it future? Or is it present? If it is a past birth, it is already finished. If it is a future birth, it will never arrive. If it is a present birth, it does not abide. For the Buddha has declared, "Bhikshus, in a single moment, you are born, you age, you die, you transmigrate, and you are reborn."

Maitreya Bodhisattva said to the Buddha that he had been teaching the many gods in heaven about the practice of the nonreturner and Vimalakirti came along and asked him this question. "Maitreya, I have heard that you have been prophesied about by the Buddha, that you would enter great and complete enlightenment in one life, in this very life. Usually one has to practice for many lives and do great practice and then go through the 52 levels and then finally enter that state of mind. But I have heard that in this one life it is said that you will become a Buddha, so please tell me, is this one life a past one life, or the present one life or a future one life? Which one life would it be?

If it is a past life, the past is already finished, so it is only conceptual and not real. The future hasn't come yet, so that is conceptual and not real. The present is also not real; if we say one word about it, then that present moment is already finished. It appears to be there but in fact does not exist in any real way. So in what one life will you be become a Buddha? If we know that we are not anything at all, then that is not present or future or past. Our clear consciousness is immediately being born and becoming with each moment and not in the present or future or past. We don't plan to hear that great bell going "gong" as it rings, rather we are aware spontaneously and simultaneously. The birds voice going "chirp, chirp" and the dogs barking "bowwow," we do not expect to hear and then hear it.

We are brought into awareness at the moment of responding to the bird's call and the dog's bark. This is our true nature. Accordingly, all humans are united in that which is zero and prior to any arising of awareness. From this mind of zero, we become one with the world outside of us, and new awareness is brought into function. Usually, however, it is not like that. We lug around all kinds of thoughts and ideas from our past, giving rise to our ego. We are always following this ego around and not in a state of mind of zero. This is why people cannot believe in each other. While knowing that we should believe in others, we cannot do so because the ego gets sandwiched in. Here we have to throw away our ego or we won't be able to become zero. When we throw this ego away, this extra skin, we become the mind of zero. The mind of zero is the true nature, which is profound and equal in all beings and unites all beings in truth. We are all

endowed with that and to awaken to it is what we have to do.

We talk about believing in God and Buddha, but that mind which believes in them has to be freed from any ego or the ways we believe will all be varied. That is not the God or Buddha that unites all beings. It is only a god and Buddha coming from and giving to ego. It can't be that kind of god or Buddha but must be one separated from ego and coming forth from the pure clear mind. From there, if we believe in God and Buddha, there will come forth the actual reality of truth. If we know that quality, we know what the Buddha was saying to Maitreya about being liberated in this very moment.

It was not because Maitreya was special but because all beings, every single one, have the same prophesy of becoming a Buddha in this one moment. All beings are alike in this. If our true nature is actually zero, then of course Maitreya is not special. If Maitreya is to be enlightened in this one moment, then all beings and people are originally pure and have within them the stratum of being of Nirvana and are already endowed with the quality of being enlightened. So what Vimalakirti is saying is "Maitreya, you don't need to teach such a difficult teaching as that of nonreturners to the young gods and confuse them all. All of your true clear minds, which are equal in all beings, are the mind of zero. We are all already endowed with this from birth.

Our body and mind are born from zero, and there is no need to free it or to give it birth. So there is no enlightenment and there is no such thing as practice, either. These are only concepts we use because we are not zero. If we see according to our original nature, the teaching about the nonreturner is unnecessary because we are neither deluded nor confused from the origin. If we are without the delusion of being a fixed small self, we are naturally and always at one with the world.

This world comes forthright in front of our eyes and we are born anew in each moment with the awareness that is born. We become joy and we become sadness, we become angry and we become happy, we become clear weather and rain and cloudy weather and storms, too. We are not something that is fixed and decided, we are born fresh and new and in truth in each and every new moment.

In the Tang dynasty, there was a Zen master named Joshu who was asked by a monk about why Daruma Daishi came from India to China. Master Joshu answered, "The oak tree in the garden."

It seemed as if his answer didn't make any sense and had nothing to do with the question, but as one European put it, "Suffering is the division of awareness into two." If Daruma Daishi was sad to leave India, or

was planning to save the deluded people in China or worried about going to another country where the weather and climate was so different or was worrying about how to make money to live there, if there was any such bifurcation of awareness or any struggle there, even if it was only a tiny bit of dualistic thinking and separation, then truly he would not have been able to save even himself.

Then again, if he had no intention, why would he travel for three years to come so far? Why would he leave India and go as far as China? He wouldn't do that without any intention at all. So did Daruma Daishi have an intention or not? If he did have such a dualistic intention, it was the intention with no intention, the empty-minded awareness. This is only brought forth in one moment with nothing else attached to it. This seems so complicated but the natural world teaches us the conclusion to it.

People are called thinking legs, but really we are legs that don't think at all. The flowers and trees in the garden, is there intention in them—or is there no intention in them? If there is no intention, then how do they bring forth the flowers in spring and why are the flowers a particular color? In front of me right now there are two magnificent lotus flowers blooming; one pure white and the other bright pink. If there is no intention there, how do these flowers come forth? Without mistake, they bloom every year at the same time. However, unlike a human, they have no feelings or consciousness.

How do they bloom so beautifully and regularly? If we say there is a deep profound awareness there, and this is how it makes us feel, then the question arises whether or not there is a great awareness in the universe. Of course, there is no human character and dualistic understanding in the universe, but we cannot help but feel a greater, huge awareness moving through all beings. Or is it just coincidence? Can we settle for that as an answer?

That which evolves and becomes ever more perfect and developed – where is its ending point? It feels as if it is all moving toward becoming Buddha. It seems that all is moving in the universe to become Buddha and the universe is already Buddha and all beings are already endowed with Buddha life. Doesn't one naturally come to see it and think about it in that way?

"The willow is the true form of the Bodhisattva of Compassion, The pine wind's song is the melodious voice of the Buddha."

If we look at it this way, we see that desires are our Buddha nature and that our form is the form of the Buddha. We are thinking that we are indeed like this but cannot actualize it. This is because we are so full of dualistic thinking, attachments, and deluded views. In letting go of all of those, we will find our way of

peace. Throwing away extra thoughts and attachments and entrusting to great nature, this is the way of zazen. If we look at it this way, we can see that young people even more than adults, children even more than young people, and babies above everyone else, are already this way.

As it says in the Bible, "Unless we become like the mind of a baby, we cannot enter heaven"

And as Ikkyu says it, "As a baby gets further and further away from birth, it goes further and further away from being Buddha – how sad this is!"

When the monk asked what was the intention of Daruma when coming to China, Joshu answered, "The oak tree in the garden."

Throwing it all away and becoming the mind of the universe, Daruma was like a living, breathing Buddha statue. This is what Joshu was saying when he answered with the response, "The oak tree in the garden." Is it not the same thing?

When we throw away and let go of all our unnecessary thoughts and attachments, for the first time we can know this state of mind of Daruma Daishi. Daruma Daishi went so far to China and had an exchange with Emperor Wu. Since the emperor was not ripe yet, Daruma left and crossed the Yangtze River. He went to the country of Gi to the Shorin temple on Bear Ears Mountain and sat in a cave for nine years. His very form was like a mountain or an ancient tree – an old pine or oak tree. Yet during those nine years, he did no translating and gave no talks, he only sat there silently, alone, doing zazen. This was the greatest example and teaching of Buddhism in China at that time. It is still functioning today, liberating

beings. There is no mistake in calling this a true miracle. This was Daruma Daishi's living by empty-minded awareness. He lived in the single nen of the life energy of the universe. Training and training, he let go of all of humans' small-minded stains and dualism.

Artists, craftspeople, and talented geniuses in the world also work form this essence. They train and purify it until bloody in their efforts. They suffer and suffer, letting go of human desires. Then, in that letting go, the small ego movement is also let go of. They are moved by the universe in all directions and moved by the heavens in their dance. It is all born from training until we realize this state of mind and we have purified away all of our desires for and attachments to what we think is attractive or don't like. Only Buddha Nature remains and is recognized. There is nothing to be pushed around by at all, only living in each moment's circumstances. There is nothing tangled and twisted inside. Each movement, each activity, in every footstep and hand movement, every thing we do is a dance and a song. This is the way of living as the way of training.

In this way, Vimalakirti praises our most pure original mind and says that our true original nature is the most splendid thing. All of us have received this equally, but because we still have ego and cannot yet pluck out the ego, we still are deluded. This is what he was saying to Maitreya, cautioning him and keeping him aware. Of course, he was using this as a way of correctly teaching what our true nature is. Then the 200 young gods were all awakened to a fresh and clear mind. "It is because of this that I don't want to go visit Vimalakirti." And he turned down the Buddha's request.

Sesshin Schedule Sogenji 1999

September	4-10	Kosesshin	16-22	Osesshin	25-29	Kosesshin	
	14-20	Kosesshin	26-30	Kosesshin	December	4-11	Rohatsu
	24-30	Osesshin	November	4-8	Kosesshin	15-21	Osesshin
October	5-11	Kosesshin	14-20	Osesshin	24-28	Kosesshin	

Newsletter Distribution Update

Thank you to those of you who updated your membership information. If you received this newsletter by regular mail and would like to receive it via email, or if you received this newsletter via email and would like a hardcopy sent to you now and/or in the future, please send a note stating your request (please include relevant information, such as email address) to Daves8468@earthlink.net or One Drop Zendo Association, c/o David Spangler, 11520 NE 114th Court, Kirkland, WA 98033-4559.



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