

Jukai, May 8th, 2016 Dai Bosatsu Zendo

Bodhisattvas, as Nyogen Senzaki would begin each talk. We have been sitting together in this wondrous unfolding—spring subtly arriving on its own unhurried schedule; wild leeks, violets and daffodils around us, and within us: new life equally pungent and beautiful. The wind, the clouds, the purifying rain...all beings are saturated with this Mind. I offer this haiku:

after days of rain
mountain mist begins to lift
subtle drift of green

And now we are joining in a ceremony in which nine of you are opening to a life informed by the Buddhist precepts. I say nine of you, but in reality all of us are taking this step together—some renewing our vows, some doing deep personal reflection.

On the fifth day of Senzaki Sesshin, deeply aware of your interconnectedness with all life, you are receiving these precepts with the understanding that they are not rules that circumscribe you, but expressions of how it is to live in true freedom.

Soen Roshi always told us, “These precepts are not given to bind you, but to make you free and happy. You are such wonderful being (Buddha) from the beginning. Now I confirm you as a Zen Buddhist friend.”

Nyogen Senzaki told his disciples a story: Once upon a time, the King of Kosala demanded that the Buddha’s monks perform miracles to prove the efficacy of the teachings. The Buddha told the King, “I do not teach my disciples the law that I may say to them, ‘Go, ye monks, and perform miracles before the people,’ but thus I teach the law: ‘Live, O monks, concealing your good deeds and revealing your faults.’ O King, this is the law that I teach.”

Therefore, by participating in this ceremony, you are pledging to live as inconspicuous bodhisattvas, doing good deeds with no thought of recognition, and openly acknowledging your errors and misdeeds. You are strongly wishing to free yourselves from egocentricity so that you can liberate all beings from suffering. This, of course, is the true miracle.

To live this way brings the greatest happiness; you cannot help but be filled with gratitude for the rare opportunity of this precious life.

Confucius said, “When I see virtue in another, I vow to emulate it. When I see evil in another, I look at myself.”

This takes courage. As you know, this practice takes courage. There will be times when you fall into the delusion of a separate self, particularly when circumstances bring up old patterns of neediness, fear, anxiety, despair, unworthiness. Then you may feel envious of another’s virtue or accomplishment, and may secretly take pleasure in another’s faults or downfall.

The principle impediment to seeing into this interrelated koan of the precepts is holding onto, promoting, and defending self against others. When you see self and others as separate, the precepts are viewed from a dualistic perspective too: Do this, don’t do that; taking and breaking. When you believe your dualistic thoughts, when you give them a reality they do not have, then you cannot honor the precepts; indeed, you cannot honor who you truly are.

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As Dogen taught, “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 the myriad things.” When you truly investigate the self, you find there is nothing within to posit or to cling to. All attachments drop away. Then everything is vividly present, and you are in a sea of diamonds—just one multifaceted jewel reflecting and shining upon all the other jewels in Indra’s Net.

All the precepts can be condensed into what the Sixth Ancestor, Eno, told the Monk Myo, who was pursuing him to take back the robe and bowl symbolizing his transmission: “Think neither good nor evil. At this moment, what is your original self?”

While just a young woodcutter, with no Zen training at all, Eno had had a profound enlightenment experience upon hearing the line from the *Diamond Sutra*, “cultivate a mind that alights on nothing whatsoever.” In the mind that alights on nothing whatsoever, no thought of good or evil can be found.

It may be hard to imagine what it’s like to have a mind in which there is no thought of good or evil; almost every thought form seems to have some trace of self and other, birth and death, right and wrong.

You cannot imagine it, and that’s the point. You have to experience it.

When your conditioned mental activity ceases, when there’s just the wide open experience of unlimited Mind we call Samadhi, there’s truly nothing to do—and it’s not at all a passive condition, it’s fully alive, ready for action or non-action, in accord with circumstances. Let every response emanate from the all-encompassing vista of the true person you are by nature.

As I told you when we had our first class together, I have broken all of the precepts; that is indeed why I feel I can give them to you.

When you fall down, when you break the precepts, as we all have done, keep it simple. Acknowledge your wrongdoing. Do not try to conceal it or deflect it, for then it will grow more cunning and dangerous. Do not seek justification. Make amends, and with sincere atonement, and determination to learn from your mistakes—which are our best and most painful teachers -- , return to your practice with renewed vigor.

Remember the title of Soko Morinaga’s book *Novice to Master: an Ongoing Lesson in the Extent of my Own Stupidity*. Each precept is an ongoing lesson for everyone, at whatever stage.

The Six Paramitas are the underpinnings of the commitment you are making today. Paramita means perfection, and refers to crossing over the sea of samsara to the Other Shore of awakened mind. To live by the paramitas is to transform the Three Poisons: greed, anger, and folly—into the Three Virtues: generosity, love, and wisdom.

The first paramita is *dana*: giving. This is the foundation of our practice. You just repeated, “I give my life to the Buddha, to the Dharma, to the Sangha.” In doing so, you are recognizing your intimacy with the whole of being, recognizing your place in endless dimension universal life.

This beautiful monastery came into being because of so many unselfish acts. It can only continue if we all live by the perfection of *dana*, responding generously to whatever needs arise. Let Ryokan inspire you: while away from his hut one night a thief came, and found vast emptiness. Ryokan returned. Having nothing else to give, he took off his robe and presented it to the thief, who somewhat abashedly took it and went away. Looking at the light pouring in his window, Ryokan mused, how I wish I could have given him this full moon, too.

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If you live by *dana*, then the second paramita, *sila*, keeping the precepts, will feel as natural as the shifting cloud formations over the glittering lake and the seemingly still yet changing mountain. Coming from the wide-open heart/mind of *dana*, your thoughts, words, and actions will manifest “the three immeasurables”: infinite gratitude for all that is past; infinite service toward all that is present, and infinite responsibility toward all that is future.

The third paramita is *kshanti*: be patient and cheerful no matter what your karma brings. Sometimes you may simply have to endure what you are sure cannot be borne. Circumstances may not always be to your liking. With patient forbearance, offer yourself to the occasion fully, and receive the severe teachings life offers with gratitude for their unforgettable lessons. Thus, you purify your karma.

The fourth paramita, *virya*: be diligent. Practice with dedication, determination, and awareness that life is short; mystery, profound. How many more breaths do you have? Don't take a single one for granted. Remember, we are all living in a burning building, as the *Lotus Sutra* says. Sit with intensity and compassionate tenacity.

The fifth paramita, *dhyana*: zazen! As we chant in Hakuin Zenji's “The Song of Zazen,” “Just one sitting, and all our harmful karma is erased.” So embrace whatever comes as the transformative experience it is. Sit with a broad and radically accepting mind, a warm heart. Enter into Samadhi. Trust in the stillness at the center of being. Have confidence in who you truly are.

The sixth paramita, *prajna*: clear insight. Probe deeply, investigate further; wake up! Cutting through preferences, know the joy of living with no complaints, with gratitude for everything. *Atta dipa*, you are the light itself; *atta sarana*, you are the refuge; *dhamma dipa*, light of Dharma; *dhamma sarana*, refuge of Dharma. Let your light shine. Radiate.

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Your Dharma name is not just yours alone; it brings you into full relationship with all beings, and is meant to inspire you as you follow these precepts in your daily life.

Jay Navas	KiGan, Vigorous Vow
Paul Trapani	Zuiken, Auspicious Humility
Lorraine Coulter	Reifu, Spirit Breeze
Karen Remmler	Chigen, Wisdom Eye
Brian Smith	Keirin, Reverential Forest
Jillian Mullins	Jigen, Compassion's Source
Shawn McGuire	Dairin, Great Wheel
Zhenya Muravyova	Myokyo, Wondrous State of Mind
Kat Nikiforova	Jakusei, Clear Tranquility