

Dojo: A Place of Practice

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One Drop Zendo was created in Seattle in 1989. Seven years have passed since then and now a monastery on Whidbey Island has been born. This is a new place that specializes in Zen training, a new dojo for practice. But the basic view that One Drop Zendo is made up of many dojos will not change. The central belief is that each and every person is, individually, "one drop," which then becomes a dojo when joined with other drops. In the workshop, in the home, while walking, while traveling, while hiking; in the very midst of these we develop and realize our mind's true peace. Wherever we do this is a dojo: a place of practice. Each person's home and single zendo room is also a dojo. If there is one deepening person, there a zendo is raised; it develops even further with two people, and if there are three, five, or nine people gathered, it will be a zendo. We do not have to be in some special place in order to do this; but rather we can do it where we are, all of the time. In each place and moment where we find ourselves individually, our creative work continues, our deepening is always in process. Continuing without ceasing, this basic way of always living is the zendo.

However, the situation of the world today is not like that of the past when there was much more of a sense of spaciousness. More and more information is available, and the influence of the various media is growing. More and more, our own centered view is being overwhelmed; we seek to look within and see the essence but instead find that the thoughts in our head are only going around and around. It doesn't ever get beyond that. So, while living in society, working with our creative and inventive efforts, the essence thins out, and becomes vacant. Unsure of why this is so, we become melancholy and dissatisfied. This happens especially when our workload increases or when we become off balance or insecure. At these times we are most likely to wonder if what we are doing is really right or not. We only remember that sense of despair. At times like this, when our way of being, our cutting tool's edge is no longer able to cut, it begins to get rusty and we have to put it to the sharpening stone, shave off that rust, sharpen it, and return to it that sharp, cutting edge. We can then return to society with our essence sharp, clear and active. We return to that sharp, cutting edge and then, within society, our essence and creativity will also function sharply. This is what is most

necessary. A dojo therefore is a place where we can sharpen our refined cutting edge, and revitalize ourselves. The clearest way of seeing a dojo and what it is, is to see it as a place where, in every part of everyday life, all day long, we work continuously on that creative and inventive functioning. We have to sharpen this rusted cutting tool until it is truly sharp. This is how we work on our mind's functioning in our everyday life.

With this meaning in mind, the zendo here on Whidbey Island will be a very sturdy and heartfelt sharpening stone for everyone. This is what is being born here. For a true place of practice there must also be a teacher, an example of how to continually work on function and essence. This quality must always be present. There must be an environment where this can be done well. In just this way, Whidbey Island One Drop Zendo is an excellent environment for this kind of zendo. For the dojo which is born here, its essence will have a deep purpose and meaning.

While teaching the young people who come to Sogenji from all over the world, seeing their character become fuller, more taut and more abundant, living with these people, I feel how they will become examples for young people all over the world. Without doubt, they will become refuges for people's minds. Beyond that, even right here, all the people gathered here and working creatively, for each of you to be able to leave your life in society behind, for even a short time, to cut away all information and external input, and return to that one great life energy-this is what is important. Seeing with sharp clarity that pure life energy which surges through everything, we may return to that clarity and seeing once again. This is how this place will be given life.

For this purpose, when this dojo is opened, there will always be from ten to twenty people who will be living here in a life of full-time training. People living in society will see from this an example for their daily life. They can come here to work on that necessary cutting edge, to work on that essence, and bring forth that vivid and vital energy. This is what will awaken us to that true nature which is within each of us. This One Drop Zendo is the place for living this.

This is not, of course, only a place for people who are specializing in this kind of practice. It is very important for people to be training here full-time, but it is also important that people who are in intensive training do not separate completely from society. To accept and embrace all people, without being moved away from the essence, then to offer energy and a positive influence with a full and taut, quiet and energetic mind is important. It is important to be able to share this kind of profound spiritual mind, to go into society with this kind of quality and touch others, embrace others,

and together, to help each other. I believe that this is how it must also work: having a full-time internal life, specializing in practice, and at the same time help those who come for any length of time, at any time of day for deepening their zazen, and sharing the serenity here. To teach and guide others in sharpening their cutting edge so that they may once more be able to return to seeing their true self. To take those whom society has given up on, those who are unstable and insecure, and to become their support-to make a place for this is also important and necessary. It is one of our deep vows. This must be done from that place which each person is clarifying and purifying-their true mind-while not letting go of the needs of society. To bring both together, supporting and polishing each other; to nurture this way of being-this is the kind of place it must be.

With this meaning in mind, this One Drop Zendo here on Whidbey Island, this environment, this quiet place, is where we can center our breathing and still remain close to Seattle, close to those many people who have already begun this work. We can come and stay here, come to this profound, deeply touching spiritual dojo. We ask for everyone's support, and ask that this become an all-embracing home for everyone; a place of refuge for the young people of the 21st century. It is also our deep vow that it can also become the place for them. We celebrate the birth of this zendo with everyone, together. From here on as well, I ask for everyone's continued support and for your great efforts and activity.

For keeping these activities going, for keeping this functioning alive, teachers must also always be in the process of development. When there is a dojo without a teacher, it becomes only ground without a direction. Where there is a teacher, the dojo is no longer just a form, but a place where a clear direction is manifested, a true direction of the deepening of the mind's quality. For this, a teacher living there is very important. But a teacher's life span is limited in years. Therefore, during this one life, another's deep life energy must also be raised and developed. This needs to happen in many places, not only in America but all over the world; in all possible places, teachers need to be present. The dojo is a place for people of the coming century to come and gather for this purpose as well. It will be refuge of mind for these people and also a place for teachers to be trained. When this is happening here, people who come, even for a short time, will be able to support each other. With this, we become able to see what is of the deepest importance. To build a dojo where this can be realized, is what is most important, and I ask for your continued favor and support in doing this.