

Before becoming a Dharma heir of Yamada Mumon-roshi in 1982...Each year since 1989 Harada-roshi has traveled to the U.S. to conduct a sesshin, or meditation retreat, at Cloud Mountain.

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"This is something that everyone understands very easily. Everyone is capable of sensing the situation in the world today. There is no one who cannot sense that very deep despair that everyone feels. But it is not a question of only fixing what is external, but it is a question also of going within and taking care of the egoistic source of these external problems. Today there are a lot of things being taken care of on the outside: there's a lot of healthy food being eaten; there's a lot of care being taken to preserve our health; there's beginning to be care to preserve our planet. People are coming to the consciousness that is needed to address these external social problems. And that's good. But even if those go to even greater lengths than they are going to now, if we don't take care of the problem within ourselves, it's not going to work. No matter how much external work is done, if what's been happening inside is not being repaired it's not going to help. It's not going to help the inner problem. The inner problem is something that each person has to do for themselves, and that is the problem of the heaviness of the ego. There is no one who doesn't feel that. We can these days say, "I want something delicious to eat," and we can get it. "I want to wear these clothes," and we can put them on. "I want to do this with my time," and we can do it. That's possible for anybody. But when it comes to being uncomfortable with our egoistic heaviness, who knows how to rid ourselves of that? When we feel we are too self-aware and self-conscious, and living on our own, small, energy in stead of a larger, greater picture, we don't know what to do about that. It's the uncomfortability generated by these inner problems that brings about a lot of our external problems. And of course we can solve those external problems by getting something to eat, or by doing something we enjoy doing. But in the end we will always return to this place within ourselves where we are uncomfortable with our own, narrow, egoistic self, and this is true with more and more people. This is what the real problem is.

And for that reason, we have zazen. For that reason we have this practice that is designed to dig in and dig out that ego, to find that place where it isn't happening, to get rid of that filter. To cut away, shave away, dig into the deepest roots and find that place where the water of Clear Mind is flowing freely. But we can't do that unless each of us does it for ourselves. It can't be done by some kind of external aid. Each person has to do it.

So when people look at what we're doing here, for example, doing a sesshin, they think, "What a narrow, rigid, difficult way of going about it." But compared

to living all your life in this egoistic bind, it's not. The things we're doing here, sitting in this posture, living in this sesshin way of living, clearly it is a very, very rigid and tight, constricted way of looking at how to live. But it's for the purpose of going to that place where our ego isn't directing our life, for realizing that place where that huge, Clear Mind freely originates from. To realize that we have to cut away all of that egoistic noise, all of that external stimulation and return to that base where that huge, clear, liberated Mind comes from. It's for accomplishing that, that we live in this way. And when we do that, we can feel our center free from having to do what we're told by that ego. Free from being controlled by that ego. Then we can take that Mind back, out into the outside world and we can begin dealing with the problems from the inside out, rather than the outside in. That is the only way that we're really going to be able to get rid of that egoistic heaviness anyway. And it is for that reason that doing zazen is so important! To dig into that ego, to root it out, to dig it out at its deepest roots—that is why we have this practice. And for doing that, we are doing zazen and practicing in sesshin.

When I was young I wasn't very different from any other kid. I had a very typical childhood. But there came a time when I had to face that dilemma like all children do, of what I should do with my life, and what it should be about. You see, my father was a temple priest, and it was typical then in Japan to do what your father does. Most kids accepted that, went along with that, but I had a great deal of resistance to the idea. It wasn't that I was required to be my father's successor as head of a temple since I had an older brother. But it was more simply because I didn't feel like doing that. I always resisted that feeling that I was going to become a priest and be taking over a temple. Instead, I always felt I was going to become a psychologist. And the reason I wanted to become a psychologist was because I didn't like myself. There were parts of myself that I really had a hard time dealing with. I couldn't take myself the way I was. I thought the fastest way to fix that was to become a psychologist myself. I wanted to remake those parts of myself that I felt were so contrary to what I saw in other people. I thought becoming able to understand people's inner workings was the best way of fixing myself.

Well, one day my father asked me to go to my school in Kyoto a little early to do an errand for him. And because I went early, the buses were very, very crowded. I had to push through this packed crowd of people to get onto the bus, then all the way to the back of the bus to find a seat. And all of a sudden as I pushed through all these people, I came upon a person who looked like someone I'd ever seen before. He struck me as a most unusual, a very mysterious person, and he was wearing a robe unlike any I'd ever seen before. It was dyed a mud color, like they wear in India. And he had a presence, a face that was of such a nature, it was like he was shining, or brilliant. I was astonished

by this man sitting there in this completely busy and full bus, just reading a book. People were standing up and sitting down but he was completely concerned with any of that, just reading a book in deep concentration. I just felt that this man was completely different, like no one I'd ever seen before. When I looked at his face it was shining and bright, and the clarity of his face and the sharp features of it made everyone else's face in the whole bus like kind of murky or clouded. I had never met a person or seen like this before, and I couldn't figure out what was so amazing about him. But what I did know was that I found it very confusing. As a person who hated temples and hated priests, here I was, astonished by a person who was dressed in priest's clothing. There I was, having been brought up in a way I didn't want to continue, thinking that temples and priests were really out of it, and there was this person who I thought had this mysterious presence, who was dressed as a priest. And the thing I remember most was trying to figure out why this person, with all this great depth and mystery, would choose this way of expressing himself. That was to me a very big question at the meeting of this man.

I was so entranced and intrigued by this man and the question he was presenting to me by his whole presence, that when the priest got off I followed him. And come to find out, it was the very same stop where I was supposed to get off. It turned out that this person, Yamada Mumon, was the president of the Buddhist college, and he was on his way to Reiun-in, a small Buddhist temple in Myoshin-ji. I followed him right to the gate and saw him go in.

I became aware of something that was very important then. I realized that psychology wasn't the way to go about it. I saw that the people who were psychologists were human beings, just like their patients. It seemed clear that the state of that human being's mind, the state of the therapist's mind, was going to affect how the patient was treated or how the patient was able to take care of their own treatment. I read that as a therapist, if you didn't have a great, expansive mind, then you couldn't be of any use to the patient. In psychology you have data, and you have different responses from the patient, but if the doctor doesn't have this great, wide, mind it's not going to work. So I was thinking to myself, How am I going to get this big, great mind? I didn't even like my own personality, so how was I going to become great and expansive? And here I was concerned with this problem, worrying about whether I was going to be able to do it or not. And right at that moment, encountered Mumon-roshi, a great, huge, Mind right in front of me. And by meeting that person I realized that doing psychology, to study all these things scientifically, learn how to gather data, do experiments and tests, is not the point. To become a person of great, round, expansive Mind is the point. And there is a faster way. Instead of studying psychology, to become that Mind is faster. And that's what changed in me when I saw Mumon-roshi.

From that time—in fact, for 30 years—I stayed with this man who became my teacher. All through high school—at the Buddhist high school—at the Buddhist college, through the training monastery where Yamada Mumon-roshi was the head training roshi, up until day I have continued, even though Mumon-roshi has passed away. I have continued to receive his teaching. And I can say without any question, that what has change my life and totally put it in the direction it is in now, is this meeting with this one person.

Where in the past we each would just consider our needs, and not be aware of what the world around us was requiring, we're now approaching a time when we can't do that anymore. The world is just too connected, just too full of things that are connecting all of us. The amount of information that comes into everybody, it gives us the feeling of not needing to judge things for ourselves anymore. We're always being told what to do, what to wear, how things should happen. And in the midst of that, there is the sense that while we need more than ever to connect with other people, we are being more isolated from them. In the same way our family situation is breaking down; people have fewer and fewer people to share their hearts, to really embrace them in the warmth of a family. Their lives have taken on a sense of isolation, without any way to express how miserable that makes them feel. And along with all that comes all the business of life because of all the media, because of all the information, because of the pace of things happening right now. In the middle of this isolated, uncomfortable mind we are walking around in a world that is so busy we can't even have time to find out what it is in our mind that is making us so discontent and unhappy. And in order to somehow assuage that feeling we go into entertainment that has so much stimulation that we're just kind of numbing ourselves to all that. Or we become intoxicated on things like drugs or alcohol or a hobby that takes us away from thinking about how unhappy we are inside. Our world has become a place where we are always avoiding facing the core issue and dealing with what's really, really, our true nature. Instead, we try to find some kind of satisfaction in an external world outside of ourselves. This is what almost every person is continually walking around always trying to do in the midst of this really busy, terribly stimulating, time, even as we sit here in this quiet, beautiful, dawn.

Around us all possible extraneous noises are happening. And it's not a time when you can run away from those noises anymore. Where you are is where they're happening. So the problem is what to do within that noise. We have a great need to find that place in ourselves where there's no scenery at all, that quiet place within where you can just sit and relieve yourself of all the burdens, of all the overstimulation and the busyness and the things that are happening all the time, to just go inside to a quiet place. How many people can let go of their

anxious mind, let go of their busy mind, let go of all those noises and things passing by them all the time? How many people can say that they have moments when they are completely serene, free of all their insecurity, without anxiety, peaceful and at one with themselves? THIS is the true state of all human beings. A state that we all have within us. A state that needs nothing else but being alive to make us completely joyful. But how easily have we forgotten that that's all we need! Thinking we need so many other things, and convinced by the media and pulled away from that recognition by society. How easily have we forgotten that completely satisfied and perfect place within us that is always with us! To be able return to that place is what human beings need right now, more than at any other time—to be able to find this place within ourselves. To touch down with our true nature, to return to that ultimately Clear Mind which we all—every single one of us—has to begin with. To return back there, to learn how to return to that place and find complete serenity within any given moment is the most necessary thing to understand—because of the times we're living in.

When you are sitting in the posture of zazen, the first thing you do is make your posture solid. You don't sit in a vague, unsettled way. You make your legs set firmly. You put your right leg up first and your left leg on top of that for the full lotus. And you make a very firm posture with the bottom of your lower back being the other part of the triangle that your two legs make. And with that very firm base you raise your spine up. It is very important to let your spine raise up straight and naturally, without any tension in it so that your whole body is relaxed and there is a natural feeling to it. With that naturally stretched-up feeling you then feel a solidity in your whole body, which allows you to do your breathing in a natural way.

Now usually we call a natural breath one that is coming from our lungs. But breathing from our lungs tends to be a kind of intellectual kind of breath. It's a high breath. So we breathe for zazen, when we don't want to be intellectual, in our abdomen. We breathe from a place about one inch below our navel. As we breathe we allow our breath to travel down to our navel; we follow it down to the place below our navel to our *tanden*. We do it in such a way that it's a relaxed, flowing breath, not a tight, forced kind of breath. This kind of breathing is very important because if we are trying to clear our mind and we don't have this kind of breath we will just be fighting intellectual things. So we breathe, allowing it to come down, at the same time keeping everything very, very relaxed, not tightening or pushing into the breath, but letting this breath flow as if we are blowing it into that area in our lower abdomen. This abdominal breathing is very important and has been found in all the breathing instructions from the time of the Buddha, in yoga, to the Chinese Taoist practices such as *tai chi* and *chi kung*. All of them have given us this same kind of point to follow in

our breathing. And by doing this we bring all of our center of energy to that area. To gather any kind of true energy we have to breathe in this way. And if we can bring our breathing to this place we can dislodge ourselves from this cluttered mind that we all are being pursued by all the time. Only by doing this kind of breathing can we clear this mind from all the thoughts that are preventing us from realizing our pure nature. Realizing this pure nature is the point of doing zazen. But if we don't have this kind of breathing, then this kind of practice won't be possible.

So once we have our breathing with our concentration always focused on our tanden, then we can work on clearing our mind by keeping our breath always coming down to this tanden area. Keeping it smooth, flowing out long, and breathing in that way.

What we are doing when we bow and prostrate is something that everyone needs to do. Probably most people can't even imagine that this is possible, but in fact we are bowing to that pure nature which is in all human beings. That is something that everyone who comes to Zen is working with and towards—to be able to realize that connection, that awareness of the world as something that is unified.

Prostrations

Now if you were to tell someone to bow to someone they don't like, then they would probably have a very hard time bowing to someone they don't like. But that is not the point. We are bowing to that part of all human beings that is able to be clear, pure, and well-developed. Our purpose is to make ourselves smaller than that great Mind that exists within all of us. That is the purpose of doing prostration. To put your forehead down on the ground where everyone walks, this is an expression of the awareness of that cleared state of mind that we get through zazen. Once you realize that all people are equal and unified what do you do to express it? You prostrate. Because in that prostration itself is expressed that awareness that there is a Mind that is greater than your own small ego.

But like I said, people who say they will bow to something they like but not bow to something they don't like—almost 100% of them won't bow to something they don't like. That's how they see it: as a choice, and a preference. But when they understand that it is something they are doing because they truly want to realize that pure, clear, Mind by getting rid of their ego, then they can do it. Because you must let go of that ego in order to bow that low. Bowing and prostrating you are crushing the ego, you are breaking the ego. Prostrating is a sign of, an expression of, the breaking of that ego—the purpose for which all countries, all nationalities are doing Zen practice.

But they have to understand why they are doing it, what it represents. That it is not bowing down to some idol. If you do zazen and you realize this true, pure Mind, then you do prostrations to express it, to manifest it, to reveal it. And once people reach the point where they understand what it is for, then they realize it is the true religious principle that is uniting all people and which can be guiding everyone at the same time.

When I went into the monastery I thought it would be different for me. I thought I was going to go in there and be enlightened right away. I wasn't going to go in there and wait around for enlightenment, like everyone else who was just there hanging out, not taking it seriously, not getting to the point. I was determined that I was one of the chosen ones who was going to get immediately enlightened when I went into the monastery. So I went into it wholeheartedly, totally, intensely, giving everything I had to it. And when it came to the Rohatsu sesshin—a meditation intensive that honors the enlightenment of the Buddha on the eighth day of December—a time when the energy and the burning intensity of the monks in the monastery is so hot you can almost feel it in the air. When I entered the Rohatsu sesshin I was determined that during this sesshin I would reach enlightenment. I wasn't going to wait around like those other guys who weren't getting enlightened in the monastery. I was going to go for it, and it was going to happen NOW! So I came to the sesshin. The first day, second day, third day, the fourth day, fifth day, sixth day, seventh day—still no enlightenment. I sat as hard as I could—everyone did. But still, no enlightenment. And I came to the eighth day, when everyone is supposed to be sharing in the wonder of the enlightenment experience in the same way as the Buddha did on his day of enlightenment when he realized his own true nature upon seeing the morning star. And still, nothing happened. And for the first time I was completely frustrated, disappointed.

I didn't know what to do. When I came to the ceremony that honored the Buddha's enlightenment I was beside myself with despair. Here I'd thought that I could really do it. That I'd planned to. I had decided I was going to, that I'd been chosen. And it didn't happen. Never had I felt such great disappointment, and I had no idea what to do next. After that sesshin I kept on for another year, and then for another year after that. Still I didn't have any deep enlightenment experience. So then after two years without a deep enlightenment experience I went to my teacher, Mumon-roshi, and I said, "I'm leaving. I can't do it here. I'm going away to sit by myself." And Mumon-roshi looked at me for a long time, and then he said, "That's fine. You can go. But what happens if you don't get enlightened?" And I answered him, "I'll think about that when it doesn't happen."

I took everything out of the monastery; I left prepared for never coming back. And I headed for the mountains.

I went here and there in the mountains, sitting by myself, sitting as hard as I could, not even knowing what day it was, not even knowing how much time I was spending there. I just went and sat and sat and sat in various places in the mountains. And I remember well this one place when I was between Yamaguchi Prefecture and Hiroshima Prefecture. I was sitting on top of this one mountain; I hadn't seen anyone for many days, and suddenly someone was coming up the mountain.

Of course in the mountains people are friendly to each other because there are not so many people in the mountains. I was doing zazen there and they came up to me and asked if I was a person of training. And I told them, Yes, I was. And they asked how long I'd been there, what I was doing. And then they told me how lucky I was. And at these words I was so deeply struck that my whole life was again changed.

They said to me, "We are also a kind of people of practice; we do the chanting of the Buddha's name. But we aren't lucky like you that we can take our whole life and give it up for training. We have to work from Monday to Saturday. In our tiny time of freedom from Saturday night to Monday morning, we come up on the mountain and practice our chanting of the Buddha's name. But you are so lucky; you are able to devote your whole life to training, and we are so envious of you that you can do that."

And at that I was completely knocked out. I realized the deep meaning of what they were saying. For them it was quite straightforward and nothing at all particular, but it made me realize what I'd been missing. I had been doing in my own small, narrow way, exactly what I wanted to do! What they were having to do was within a social situation of having to work, having to keep their training going, having only a very small amount of time to devote to it totally. And here I was, already blessed, already having been given this chance to give everything I had to training, to devote myself completely to training—and I was running away from that and cutting myself off, shutting myself up in a small narrow place in my mountain training all by myself.

I realized right then the mistake I'd been making, and I went right back to the monastery. I knew what I had to do now. And at that moment it was like all of my burdens dropped off, as if someone had hit me on the back and everything was awakened within. I realized that there was nothing I needed to do for myself in the first place! If every moment that came along I just took as it was, then there was nothing that could be a problem to me anymore. That small,

narrow way in which I had been looking at MY enlightenment, MY thing to have to do, I have to do this for MYSELF—that is what had been bothering me all along from the very beginning through that day on the mountain when I realized that there was no self to be bothered with it! I had been crushing myself and making myself miserable worrying about this problem of MY enlightenment and realizing it for MYself, making MYself come to a conclusion that was in fact found in the living of every single day! If I did nothing, if I didn't even worry about my own problems, things always came to me. And those things that came to me in every single day, to accept those was my training and my way of expressing my enlightened mind. No matter what it was that came to me every day, the next thing that came, the next situation I found myself in, to live that TOTALLY as my training was what I had to do. Not to go isolate myself up on a mountain, closed off from everyone, turning them all away, and worrying about my own small state of mind! That wasn't the point at all. But to go and be what every day brought to me—that was my practice and my expression of my enlightenment. And ever since I realized that, my whole life has been completely different. I know there is no problem for myself, because there is no one there to feel that there is a problem. Just to take what every day brings, and do that with my best, wholehearted effort as a person of practice. That was the way to live.

Often, enlightenment or kensho or satori is considered to be some kind of unusual experience. Or something external or some kind of special phenomenon. But it's not like that. There may be some kind of sudden revelation or some kind of sudden perception, but it's not something that is that unusual or that strange or foreign that we come upon or that comes upon us. What it is, is an ability to see without any interruption of the ego, without any filtering of the ego.

Since we're all walking around seeing things through our ego-filter almost all the time, to suddenly be able to see without that filter is a surprise. But it is nothing that we have ever not had. They say that the mind of a baby is something we can compare this to; a baby isn't seeing things from an egoistic place. It is seeing directly and clearly. It's the exact, same kind of thing when we are seeing without the ego-filter. We see that there is nothing to be analyzed in it. When you're seeing a flower you're not thinking that it's red. Or seeing a bird, you're not thinking what it's name is. You are just seeing directly. When we talk about enlightenment we are talking about that Mind which is perceiving in every moment without the obstruction of an egoistic filter. The experience of that Mind and realizing where it is, and realizing where it is coming from, is what is called enlightenment, or kensho, or satori. It is not some kind of supernatural state of mind that we are able enter or that comes upon us. It is not like some kind of altered state of consciousness. To think that we are trying to do this

practice for some kind of narrow experience for the individual, thinking we are going to come upon some kind of big experience someday—this is a very low level understanding of what this enlightenment is. It's a return to our basic state of consciousness, which we possess all the time and are always cluttering up with extraneous views and and with the ego. The ego is consistently on top of us; it's always, always there. And if we can succeed in clearing it out, what we can see without it is truly surprising. That kind of surprise, that kind of wonder, that kind of enjoyment and joyfulness, is obvious, and it does truly happen.

The difference for that ego is a big difference, but it's not something we come to externally. It's something we come to internally. We realize it by getting rid of things, not by adding on an abnormal state. And once we realize this state, once we recognize this, we say, Ah! This is that Mind that is without all of those things. And then, to live every moment without that egoistic filter on that inner eye—that is what has to be done. That is the real goal. And that is the larger part of our training practice. Once we have recognized that new way of seeing, that new eye, that inner eye—once we have encountered that, then we must nurture the ability to encounter every moment of our lives from that clear, pure, place. To live in that is the most important part of the practice. To be able to take that clear Mind which is not covered by ego and keep that going, to live in that place all the time—that is what has to be done. And until we know what it is, we can't keep it going. So that first understanding of where that place is, is often what people sometimes call enlightenment or kensho or satori. But to be able to come to every moment with that state of mind, that is what's most important.

We need this clear, pure, state of mind because everyone is so far from knowing what to do about the terrible situation they're in. And this is true on many different fronts. For example, people used to be able to believe in God. In the olden days there was a real sense of belief in something, for children especially. And you could really take that in and find comfort and guidance and direction in it. But nowadays, people who are really able to believe in God, not just to go to church for some functional reason or because it looks good socially, but actually have that belief, are blessed with that belief, and are very few. Instead, what has come to replace that is a belief in science and technology, the worlds that are bringing our lives to a convenient place where things can be produced and understood analytically and scientifically. This instead is what people are counting on and being reconfirmed by. But science and technology are filling our world with a lot of technical, material riches without giving us anything spiritual. They have taken away our believe in something that can be seen without our five senses, and replaced it with nothing more than material advantage and convenience. We have all these machines that make our lives easier; we have a lot of things we can relate to in terms of comfort or

production. But what has been lost, what hasn't been given back? Look at economics. Economics supposedly helps to solve our problems by giving us more money or by making our world more stable financially. But people believe more in this economics thing than in something which is to be found within themselves. Economics is concerned with external things, and it is external things that we are always concerned with and talking about. But external things cannot fill the void created by our lost ability to know what God is or even to believe that a God is possible.

For example, look at the workplace. The work in the old days was done by people doing apprenticeships; they were learning to make very fine quality material. Things that are made now by the hundreds each day were once made one at a time after many long years in apprenticeship, and may have taken months or even years to make only one of good quality. Today things are not made with the same kind of quality because science and the economics of scale can produce hundreds of them that are just as convenient, in the same amount of time. No one cares except in a very few special cases, how it is being made or the heart it is being made with. And people who come to a company—they're all the same. Just because someone has been there for ten years and can make it in a better, more crafted way, doesn't make any difference because it is all being produced automatically. So someone who comes into the company that day is the same as someone who has been with the company for twenty years; if they can just learn how to use the machinery there is no difference between them. So that respect, that caring, that really meaningfulness in a hand-produced product has disappeared. Some people do feel it. But that overall way of life is not common anymore.

And then we get to these factories—the idea of making such huge establishments. Smaller companies have to join together to make one huge mega-company in order to survive. And then within that one company you have competition. You have this company all divided into little groups, each of which has one part of the automation line. And those little groups are competing with each other. So people are looking at each other as someone to compete with, not people to be one with or to connect to.

And then from there we go to the home, which is loaded with all kinds of information. And if you don't have that information you can't keep up with your job, you can't compete with that other part of the company who's doing things and trying to do them better than you. You have this kind of constant stimulation of information—not in a creative way that allows you to be creative and imaginative, but rather, in a dictatorial way, telling you what to do, how things should be done, and how the world is, instead of letting you create and be full of a world which is imaginative and full of possibility for each individual

person. You get bombarded with all this information about how things are on the outside, how what is going on is going on. And then in the home, instead of living as a group, connected, everyone has their own television in their own room. Getting together and working out what to watch is not popular. Everyone goes to their own room and watches what THEY want to watch. And everyone has their own telephones. Instead of waiting for the next person to finish and making your own phone call, it's very convenient to have your own telephone for your own phone call. And this brings about a tremendous amount of loneliness and melancholy and despair, in isolation in your own house or your own company, or your own world. You get into a car, and when you close the door it's your own space. It could be two people from the same family, but when they come to an intersection they're enemies. Whoever gets their foot on the pedal first, goes first. That kind of egoistic driving, being competitive with everyone instead of cooperating and living together with them, is just everywhere.

And we go on from that to just how people are with each other: this competitive way of trying to get what you need ahead of everyone else. The world, for example, is divided. People fight against each other across lines that don't even exist—these lines of countries which have been invented by the ego on the earth. There is no line on any kind of natural ground that says "This is this country, that is that country." There is no line on the ocean that says, "This is this country's territory, this is that country's territory." Only human ego with its relentless urge to make things our own, trying to compartmentalize, trying to compete—only this ego has made this kind of constriction of our earth, this division of our earth happen. It doesn't even exist in reality! Only people's egos and protective energy and territorial feelings have made those lines become accepted and real and made everyone deal with them. This kind of thing just makes our dilemma of being isolated and miserable and feeling lonely deeper and deeper all the time.

And what is there to do about this? All of these problems are being loaded upon us without any alternative for finding a place where we can be connected. For finding a place where we can come together to feel the original Mind we are all endowed with. We're completely aware when we realize that true Mind, of how we are all connected, whereas everything in society, everything around us is stating to us how separate we are, and pushing us apart from each other. Therefore, to be able to come back to that place which is beyond that egoistic push, competitive push, isolated rigidity—to realize that Mind which sees things directly, truly, as they are, not in the sense of ego, which is separating and disconnecting everything: To be able to come to that Mind where that great, huge, embracing Mind is possible, is what is most necessary right now. That's why this practice is necessary right now. This

expansive Mind, this Mind that sees directly, knows the all-inclusiveness, is aware of the connection between everything. Because when you get rid of that ego, all you see is one unified whole. That connection of everything in one's being is what is apparent when that ego is gone away. But as long as we all hold onto our ego because we are forced to because of what society demands of us— unless we free ourselves from that and return to this clear Mind, we will never be able to solve that suffering and that deep anguish that comes from our separation from everything including each other. For this reason, this possibility of a way to get out of that ego bind, to relieve ourselves of that and get back to that true Mind which is clear and huge and all-embracing, is very, very important right now.

When I came back from the mountain I knew from what had happened there, exactly what I had to come home to and what I had to do. I understood that until that time I had been sitting and living with a very small, egoistic idea of what it was I was doing all this for. It had been an egoistic urge that had carried me to the mountains in the first place, even though what I was trying to do was to reach a deep enlightenment experience. So when I came back to the monastery I didn't have that sense anymore. I knew then that my life wasn't about my own problems; those problems didn't exist. What I had to do with my life was to live it totally with the purpose of bringing this crystal awareness to other people. That's all I really wanted to do—and that was in fact what I'd been doing from the beginning. But I had closed it down in an egoistic, small way. I'd gone to the mountain for only my own enlightenment; it had been an expression of my ego. But because of that I'd been able to awaken to that greater purpose, awaken to that greater Self that had work to do in this world.

And so when I came back, my zazen also became very different. Before when I sat I would sit with a very strong sense of myself, of myself being there, a heaviness. Now I didn't have that at all. I was sitting being lived through by another great energy. And for the first time, my eyes would be placed where I was focusing, and they wouldn't move. They would be drawn into the floor where I was looking. And when I was doing kinhin—walking meditation—my gaze would just be straight, and not feel like looking anywhere else, drawn into where I was looking. And this went on for several days. It brought me to a place where I could answer koans a lot faster. I clearly knew what my teacher was saying to me. The things that had been stopping me before weren't stopping me anymore. Those things that had been in the way, obstructing me, weren't there anymore.

And I saw how easily I could understand what my teacher was saying, and the koans, and the words that were given as I passed through the koans. I could

grasp them very quickly, and they seemed more obvious to me. I knew because of the way things were going that my sitting went much, much more lightly. I was there energetically, but I wasn't heavy anymore. What had happened to me on the mountain had turned my life around and had changed me in that time.

Zazen instructions!

Just because we sit in zazen doesn't mean that our mind will naturally, because of that, become clear and empty of any egoistic filter. But by beginning in that way we can come to this place where we are able to think of others more than ourselves. Human beings in general are always centered on what their own needs are, what is good for them, what is best for them, and have very little time to consider what's better for other people. Because of this we have people all the time struggling and bumping into other people's wishes and feeling that what they want is more important than what someone else wants. In fact, the time when the Zen teaching has been most popular has been the times when there has been the most struggle among human beings. Only with this kind of practice can a mind become wide and expansive beyond what the ego wants all the time. Our minds—no matter how hard we try not to be, no matter how hard we try to control them—our minds are continually bombarded by egoistic wishes, by egoistic expressions, by egoistic things that just come out of nowhere. Therefore, along with the breathing and the posture, we have to practice the concentration which comes with the exhalation. As we exhale to that very final point, we count a number—always with the breath in your tanden, breathing out the final, most possible point in your breath, never letting go of your concentration, keeping always focused on that no matter how many different thoughts come in. Letting go of them. Not worrying about them. Not giving attention to them, but just focusing on that breath. And if you do that over and over again, keeping the top of your body relaxed, keeping yourself solid so that your breath can come out without a lot of motion that's distracting you. Keeping your breath always coming out to that very last point, from your abdomen.

If you breathe from a high place—if you breathe up here only—then it tends to make it even more emotional. And being ruled by emotions and your ego is not the point. You are trying to go in the opposite direction from that. So keeping your breath low is very important. If you can develop that breath by doing it over and over and over, not just on the cushion but in all places of your life, you come to a state of mind where your mind is truly wide and open. And when you come to this open state of mind, because you've become clear and serene within in yourself in this kind of sitting, you reach the point where the breath goes on for a very long time and you come to that place where the egoistic noise is quieted. Those egoistic noises don't ever go away, but we don't pay attention to them anymore. And when you keep focusing on your breath and not paying

attention to them, what comes is this huge, expansive state of mind that was there from the very beginning. And so you are able to live. The more you practice, the more easily it comes. You come to it, this state of mind. And by living in this state of mind you are able to let go of that small-minded view of what's best for you and think, "What does this person need?" "What does this situation want?" "What is the most appropriate way to behave right now?" "What can I do for this?" Not "What can this do for me and how can I be helped by this situation?" Rather, "What can I do to help others in this situation?" It comes naturally in that case. And this is just exactly what this world needs right now. This world is so scrambled up, like other times in history, because everyone is just flaunting their desires. Flaunting their egoistic ways of thinking about things, saying anything they want to say about what their opinions are strong about—discussing that instead of letting go of all that and just becoming this huge, wide Mind that embraces everyone and allows them to do what they need to do, allows them to get what they need. Letting go of your own needs, knowing that those things aren't so important—not because you're trying or think you have to, but because when your egoistic clutter is dissipated there's no longer a need to defend, and go for that stuff anymore. You can let go into the huge Mind that is there for everyone.

Many people may wonder how just sitting there and doing this kind of counting, how that is going to get you to this place where you can get rid of this ego which is so strong and which is always numbing your real feelings and your larger Mind. But in fact, if you just sit, become a fool to it, repeat it, go on with it, continue, it is guaranteed that breathing from the tanden, exhaling as long as you can and then inhaling naturally, will get you to that place where that Mind is wide and expansive. And if you get to that place, then living your everyday life will be full of that kind of energy, and that kind of width and breadth. In fact, the energy in that width and breadth comes from that kind of breathing.

People say it's foolish, just sitting down like that, but it isn't a matter of doing it because someone is telling you to. Sitting in this posture and doing this kind of aligning of your breath and mind wouldn't have been done for this many centuries if it didn't really get you to a place that was this important. So it may seem like a small thing, and people may decide not to practice because they don't believe in it. But you just have to become a fool in this practice and go on with it, continuously and repetitively, and without allowing any gaps. If you do it in this way, then this huge Mind comes of its own. If you sit in this way, then you come to this place and you naturally want to share it with other people. And if other people can see this and understand that it is possible to realize their true nature in this way, then they are going to want to develop this kind of mind, too. In that way you are passing it around just by becoming it.

You may ask, What good is this small, clear, state of mind for solving the problems of humanity, if we are only one mind in many? But what other way is there to do it? If one person becomes clear, then the things that are usually confused and complicated in the outside world can be seen by them in their clearest way. And that way of seeing things is passed on to everyone around them, and the world begins to become easier to deal with and clearer for everybody who can stay in this widened Mind. That passes around to others, and in this way the purpose of zazen—this focused practice—is to bring all of us to this more peaceful, centered way of living and seeing the world.

We believe we should live like those who have come before us, but to become concerned with possessions and money is not the way it has to be done. When my teacher, Yamada Mumon-roshi, moved from the monastery in Kobe where he had lived for some twenty years, to become abbot in Kyoto, he just one day got up and left, carrying only one thing—his wrapping cloth holding only his diary. Leaving everything else behind, all the things he had gathered and accumulated for twenty-seven years. Most people clean up and organize around themselves in apprehension of death. Mumon-roshi had no attachment to that or the idea of doing that. When he died, never even having had a cold for over twenty-seven years, in the five days before his death he just became a little weaker. He left as someone taking off their clothes, smoothly passing on.

There are things that Mumon-roshi in his physical life couldn't completely finish, and I have taken them on for him. Or more than that, though Mumon-roshi's physical life ended with his physical body, that true Life energy keeps going, and I am simply continuing the expression of that in the way that Mumon-roshi gave light to. When someone is as deeply enlightened or touches the true Source as directly as Mumon-roshi did, there will always be someone around who is deeply impressed by that person's state of mind. And when that person who is moved and impressed keeps that going and people around them are again moved and full of wonder at that. That's how that keeps working. It is because the deep enlightenment of the Buddha or the deep understanding and love and compassion of Christ were like that, that people have been impressed and felt that deeply and kept that going on. And that is the way we have today the teachings of that state of mind continuing. I am absolutely sure that the Buddha did not have any wish or vow to turn everyone into Buddhists. All he wished for was the true liberation of all human minds.