

Sogenji March 2012 Teishos Daie no Sho

Here we have the letters of Daie Zenji to Ryorochu yet actually addressing his older brother who is practicing in a conceptual, mistaken way. Here he brings in the sixth patriarch and the platform sutra. The disciple of the sixth patriarch Shido Zenji has the same challenge as the older brother. Shido Zenji brought this questions to the sixth patriarch because they were seriously deterring him from his practice. The sixth patriarch said that from his age of 15 there was a section in the Nirvana sutra he held most precious, which is the Yuikyogyo, the last sutra given by the Buddha. The Buddha actually reached the age of 80. A miraculous age since at that time most people died around 40 years of age. The Buddha was a born a prince, he had anything he could wish for, he had a lovely wife and a child Rahula. Yet the Buddha's greater concern was to find the welfare of all humankind. Though his country and the neighboring country were always conflicting, beyond that he needed to know the deepest truth. He made a deep resolve to find the answer and thus entered the mountain of Nantokusen. And he realized directly that source of mind that unites all beings directly. From this realization at the age of 35 he taught until the age of 80 without a break. Now when he headed back on his last trip to his home country, near Kushinagara, he ate bad food, and in the grove between the two sala trees he entered paranirvana. That which collects everything that he taught is called the nirvana sutra. And Shido had been reading this sutra for over some ten years and yet he felt unresolvable doubts. So he went to see the deeply awakened teacher the Sixth Patriarch. The Sixth patriarch asked him what he did not understand and he answered with the most famous lines from the Nirvana sutra.

In the olden days there was a monk who was called Sessan Doji, who trained honestly like a child, and thus he received the name Doji which means child. He had done much training and one day the ogre Rasetsu came by and said: This world has no fixed being, it is always changing. In the winter it is snow, in the spring flowers, in the summer green leaves and colored leaves in the autumn. For us as well, we are a child, and become a youth, an adult and an old person. Our lives are constantly changing, a young face becomes and old face. A large boulder seems unchangeable but is always being worn away. There is nothing that does not change constantly. This is the Buddha's first deep awakening. Why is this so? Because it is the nature of this world. Things are constructed and the according to karmic affiliations, they become a certain form and when that form ends, that existence is finished. There is nothing that stays the same. This is what Rasetsu was chanting. And Sessan Doji said: Yes, this is exactly how it is! Yet these are only the two beginning line of the song, where are the two finishing lines? A song always has four lines. Rasetsu said: Yes, that is true. But I am too hungry, I can't tell you the last two lines. I need some living meat and then I will be able to speak those last two lines. – My body is a warm flesh body, I don't need it, I only need to know the truth. – So the ogre said: If we die and have an awareness that is on and off again, that is the awareness of this body, this whole world, it is

always changing. Coming and going, in the same way, this body is transient, it is not permanent. We experience through this body a past and present and future, are always analyzing, but we are also always thinking in dualistic terms. To realize, to not realize. If we could let go of that, then there is no more idea of such a thing as being alive and being dead. Our mind is this always serene way of being, no longer caught on the phenomena. Our delusion is in dwelling in dualism. Without that we are always at peace. We mentally perceive and there right away we are in the flux of things. If we let go of that, we are in the world of peaceful perception. But if we see that place from where the thoughts are constantly changing, it is a huge unchanging mind, then we are no longer caught in the flux. Sessan Doji heard this and said: I always thought there was some thing that I would discover that was unchanging, but now I see it was my perception that was wrong. And Rasetsu was about to gobble him down, when he turned into Taishakuten, the heavenly protector, who embraced Sessan Doji and took him to the heavenly realm. In this way Sessan Doji could learn the final truth for which he had yearned for years.

The Sixth patriarch's disciple expressed his doubts regarding the part in the Nirvana sutra where it says if we realize that all is in flux and transient, even though all of us will become old and die, yet we still have that place in us where we can know the peace of realizing to not be attached to those things. We have to separate from all things without exception; this is the truth of the world. If we can see and accept this, then we are no longer confused and can accept this as the law of how things actually work. But people nevertheless want to hold on to their own current position, their current relationships as they are and are not able to let go and let the flow take place. It is this that causes all of our suffering. As the Buddha said clearly, life is suffering. His whole life the Buddha taught the teaching of the four noble truths and the eightfold path.

Everyone who lives would like to only live in happiness. We will always find out that this does not work. And even if we are in a happy situation, there will always be some melancholy left. And if we seek happiness, that will not resolve our insecurity.

The Buddha taught us to stop chasing after some happiness, but to acknowledge that life is suffering. And then even the smallest treasure becomes our fullest harvest.

So why is life suffering? This is because we gather. We are born and all day we have to breathe and need air, we have to eat, we need food – and for this we have together things to stay alive. But it does not end with that. We want more and more and more, we want fame, we want things, we want excellent descendants. And if we do not get these things, then we suffer. The suffering occurs because we have a body. We get cold and sick, we need to go to the hospital, have an operation. All of this comes from being born and having a body. And then there is becoming old. We do not think of it

when we are young, but our body get sold, we have more pain, our friends die. We have a difficult time staying always healthy. This is what life is like.

And then there is always having to be around someone you can't stand. One of the other great sufferings of being alive. And seeking and seeking and seeking for something you have aimed for with everything that you are. Because of our perceptions and ideas, because we have them, that is why we suffer. It is truly wonderful to use our eyes, but then we see these things and we start to want them ourselves. And we are able to hear and hearing is wonderful until we hear people talk badly about us. Because we have a body we suffer and this is how life is. And to all of this the Buddha said: Don't be attached to all of these things. Extinguish those three poisons. Fear greed ignorance. Extinguish them since they keep coming up in our mind. Throw it all away. Stop that ongoing thinking. That noisy thinking. There is no true need to have all of this, and there is no true peace with all of that. We have to find that right now, make efforts, speak the right words. Follow the eightfold path. Use the right intention. Live by right action. This is what the Buddha taught his whole life and so many awakened from there. Only then is there true mind possible.

Today's happiness is today and put away what happened yesterday. And we don't worry what is coming tomorrow, that is our wisdom.

In this world today there are far too many children committing suicide. Thinking that they are going to die anyways, why wait? This is becoming more and more common. Hate and resentment so deeply affects people. Hate about something that happened years ago to our family, and it is still being remembered. One day I am going to get even. While we pray for peace, yet we do not know what will come up next in our mind. If we let go of all attachment, then we can feel this world directly. Sometimes people suffer alone thinking that no one ever had such a miserable life. But if we climb up the mountain and look down on all the houses, we know that each and everyone of those households has suffering and pain and misery. And thus our burden becomes a little lighter, knowing that we are not alone in this world. We have wisdom and that can revive our thinking in a clear instant. This is not conceptual. When we know that everything is naturally in flux, then we can truly know that place of peace.

What you need to know right now is to pierce through human's mistaken delusions and then, what will we see and know from there. The Buddha says it clearly, if we think in dualistic terms, we think there is a body and another thing called a soul. This is a mistaken view. If we are in pain in our body how can we receive peace and death joyfully. How can that be? Or how can a soul with no form receive peace. If our body is a phenomena, like a wave on the water. That only comes forth with the wind, with karmic affiliations of becoming a wave. That wave's original nature is the same as the original nature of water, which then appears as a wave. Sometimes it appears as a

wave, sometimes as a water, according to karmic affiliations. How can it become peaceful? Does it mean it doesn't appear when it is peaceful? and what is joyful about that? Using this, Master Daie responds as if there were two people there talking about that. People in the world are deluded about their phenomenal existence. They think their senses, imagination, activities, memory, and experience are harmoniously existing when this is all about a borrowed form. People think it is actuality. The flowers bloom, birds sing, people come and go. People think this is an actuality, but there is nothing that stays like that forever. This is like talking like the Asahi river, which is said to flood. Where is that? The water is flowing is seeing and is referred to that as flooding. But it is not the actuality. that is the same with our body. We exhale, we inhale and all of our cells change and change in every breath. Our brain cells change completely every year. Even evergreen trees are not always green. But their needles don't fall at the same time, they appear to be always green, but it is only like that if we conceptualize. Because we think we are this from we get upset when criticized and happy when praised. we also get upset when we die. Our being exists in a non transient form. We are so happy with gain and benefit and so sad to lose. We just believe we are this body totally. And there is no escaping old age and death. In the world of birth and death we get upset and attached, flailing back and forth. When the actuality is clear.

Like it says on the last verse of the Diamond Sutra:

Thus shall ye think of this fleeting world. A star at dawn. A bubble in a stream. A flash of lightning, A summer cloud, A flickering lamp. A phantom and a dream.

Because we don't realize we are a borrowed form we get upset and attached. We feel joy and pain and we don't know what it is to have a life. Wondering in our minds not being able to settle. Nothing to be attached in our mind. Buddha taught us we are always cycling in the 6 realms: Through the Hell realm where we are unable to believe at all, or the realm of the Hungry Ghosts where we are never satisfied, the realm of Brutes always angry or being Humans, always ashamed and embarrassed, wishing we had done things differently, or the realm of heavenly beings, where we are having such a good time with what we are doing, but it doesn't stay either. From morning until night we have all these different circumstances that bring forth continuous change and unsettled mind states. That is why the Buddha gave us wisdom to see through all of this: Where we are in our truest state is that of the three minds of Nirvana: When we have extinguished all our greed, anger and delusions. When we are settled in our truest mind. But then we worry, we think what is so good or fun about doing that? Start doubting that higher quality of being, and doubting our zazen practice.

We have traveled a long road to get here. Starting from a single cell passing from reptiles, mammals... we are all still that one cell. We become the most completed

version of our potential. We are able then to become responsible for this world. Because why were we born human after all. We have to see all the species, all the ones that have been left behind. Look at the meaning of this evolution, we must reach our highest potential. See the value, the importance of being born a human being and within this body have the chance to awaken. This is the truth of the serenity of Nirvana.

The Buddha was not speaking of transiency for a conceptual purpose. It is not about understanding the words beyond birth and death. For that comprehension we do zazen. With all its difficulties, we continue. We don't add on any ideas to what we perceive, internally we are with no concerns. We are not worried on gain and loss, we let go of dualism thus escaping the Six Realms. If we separate from that duality, we can see the origin from where all of that comes forth. We see how it all actually works, then we don't need to be thrown around by circumstances. Just seeing this world as it is comes with zazen. Our mind becomes as a mirror. Reflecting but never touched by what it reflects. Just like a train seat: seeing the view without being moved by the train's speed. The serenity of Nirvana is not a world of nothing at all. We see what comes at us clearly. Then we don't get moved around by anything. Then we can also see other's state of mind and that is zazen. We don't need to be moved around by anything on the world, with this state of mind, then a criminal would not have to steal. In this world were people can't trust each other anymore, to become that clear state of the serenity of Nirvana.

...5...

A mistaken view is corrected by Master Daie. The Buddha dharma is not separate from our body. It is our wisdom to see this. Then we are not caught on every detail: Like being sick, ageing or dying. To see through this dualistic version of having a life and a death. Be free and see it all encompassed very clearly. If we think "Oh, why bother, we are all going to die anyways" then we are already caught in duality and throwing away human's deepest, truest value. Serenity of Nirvana is an actual state of mind, not a concept. Serene when we see beyond any idea of a division of life and death. The Sixth Patriarch pierced through that division of life and death and expressed it in a poem:

The Buddha said it clearly: Every existence is in serene Nirvana. But what is that! And this is what he is telling in this poem.

The Sixth Patriarch says: Listen to my gatha: extinguish the flames of greed, hate and ignorance. This is the serenity of Nirvana, the universe's source, the substance of the Buddhas deep awakening. Our mind's truth: there is nothing missing or extra anywhere.

As Esai Zenji wrote: "Oh Great Mind! It is impossible to measure the height of the Heavens, yet the mind is above the heavens. It is impossible to measure the thickness of the Earth, yet the mind is below the Earth. The sun and the moon shine with a great radiance, yet the mind is the source of that radiance. Within the mind the four seasons open in their sequence. Within the mind the sun and the moon move. Oh Great Mind!

Esai Zenji tells us about This mind called great bright and round. It embraces all. Nothing missing, nothing extra. Even science cannot measure the height of the heavens, every single thing in this world they are contained in the Mind. Including all the things still unknown. We all have this mind within us as well, that mind that can swallow down all things that happen in this world. Or we could say this mind simply reflects every detail that comes through. The serenity of Nirvana is walking this truth. Realize this with your own body. Like the Buddha still sitting under that sala tree. We each have to do it for ourselves as well. Throwing away everything, also all our ideas. See beyond the actual truth. The Buddha was human and we are human too! We can actually do this. Resolve the question of Life and Death, gradually every cell becomes this Mu. Even our busy mind wants to come along and becomes quiet. Suddenly all become one and the same. Our functions remain, but it is all gathered into One. Then every cell, every sense is awake and alive. All ideas are dropped. No more difference between subject and object can penetrate. Our true zazen gives us this possibility. Esai words are still words yet we can right now drink down all time and space. Then the rest of our lives we won't be confused or doubt again, we will be full and taught and never caught by life or death or moved around by anything.

If we see the collection of ego and personal ideas that affect our perception, we can see how they work. See how they affect our perception until we don't get confused anymore. we can Know that it is all phenomena. That person in the picture smiling, but it is not always smiling, that bird singing, it is not always singing. It is all phenomena. We are all phenomena. Each second each one of us is changing. It is as if we are all in a dream. As the Buddha says: "Thus shall ye think of this fleeting world. A star at dawn. A bubble in a stream. A flash of lightning, A summer cloud, A flickering lamp. A phantom and a dream".

Do not be fooled by this world. It is just one instant. It only exists because we think it does. A mountain moves, a river stops. How could we say this is a bad person, or this is a good person...We can't be caught on phenomena. Goso Hoen Zenji says: Who is it that uses the wisdom of the Buddha and Maitreya. Who is it that is a slave to them. To awaken to that person who uses them. Then for the first time that wisdom will be used. outside of phenomena.

Each and every one of us need to awaken. We are all equally ignorant, not saints or sages. Thus every one offers to this world, perfected and realized. Offering to all

society this serenity of Nirvana. See the goal of your life and what are you living for. If our goal is clear we are not stopped by phenomena. Use our life to bring the truth to all others, then we won't mind the great efforts we need to do.

...6...

Shido is wondering what happens after we die? If nothing, then what do we train for? Master Daie says: Among the external views some may say that this is a life or that there are further lives after this one, or some of them may say there is nothing further. But all of this is imagination, nothing to do with actuality. The Buddha did not open his mouth once to this question. While this huge world in which we live is real, we will only do a big mistake if we cut it into ego size chunks. We hear things such as: we die we get a new body or that if we die nothing happens. Torei talks about that second version. That if there is no future, why practice at all? Our experience is not within any words. Master Daie says: The serenity of nirvana is not a separate place, not one more thing. This body allows us to experience this serene state of mind.

Kyonin asks: How can we find peace if we no longer have a body? Master Daie says: Stop looking at his question conceptually. The answer that you seek can only be found in the experience. And in this way a decaying body is a given. Our true nature is prior to any mental understanding of any of those things whatsoever. Things like young or old, male or female...In Zen we let go of all concerns within. We don't add any ideas of good or bad. we do zazen and we go prior to all the differences. We must see the original source of the awareness that brings those phenomena. From the Origin there is no one single thing. With zazen we can actually go to this place prior to all these differences. Using our present body, letting go of all those gaps. Becoming that awareness that realizes each breathe. Like fish scales, right one after the other. Never leaving a space in between. Until we only are one single breath. Never letting the uninterrupted flow leak away. If we become self conscious shadows enter. That is why we do it as if we are filling up a balloon, never stopping until it is full and taught. Or as if we are filling up a cup, drop after drop until it overflows. Our awareness is what explodes, then we become one with the air, the flower, the mountain. No more separation possible between self and other. Suddenly there is absolutely nothing to hold on to. Ideas of heaven or hell, it all drops away. To realize this we sit, and it takes this body to give it its functioning. Then there is no more confusion or need to seek satori.

When we open this truly seeing eye, we can know from just seeing, how a person who is present is: Sturdy like 10 tons of weight because they are totally present right where they are, not handing over their own awareness to scattered external things. Whether they are young or old, male or female, that is all irrelevant. It is not about the form, or the world of phenomena. Or about a life after death. They are right here with both feet right on the ground, holding heavens and earth in their own hands. Because we

don't experience this, we get pulled around by ideas about the future, about death because we are not totally present. Our actual truth is from a mind that is not caught on any of that. Doing zazen is not about holding ideas about the past, present or future. We are realizing the absolute Now. Then none of it has meaning whatsoever. Seeing then: The flower brocade, the color blue of the flowing river. We are seeing always right here and right now. We don't need to go anywhere else. And if we are totally immersed in that, everything comes right to where we are. The cooking, cleaning, zazen, sanzen, everything comes right to where we are. By becoming everything, we regenerate, we recharge. While we are doing all these activities, right then and there we come to life. Seeing the flowers, the birds we are revived. This world creates and destroys on goingly but at some point that too will end. The universe will be destroyed. Right now it is expanding but at some point that will also change. Whatever is born will die. whatever is a form will change. A monk asked: will this Buddha Nature also be destroyed and gone? Rinzai also said: even if it is made out of wood it doesn't burn, even if it is made out of water it doesn't drown. Buddha Nature will still exist right? or else what do we train for? The response was unexpected: "Yes, it is all destroyed together" and here he thought everything was eternal. For this he wanted to awaken, now for what? He left and met Master Tozu. He explained what had happened and Master Tozu said: How grateful to know that you met such a Buddha! How come you left this rare Master? He returned and his Master had died. So then he went back to Master Tozu and found out he had just died too. This pitiful monk, he had not gotten it. Will we be with that destroying world? we will be with it. It has to be soaked into us like that, in an unmovable way. where is the use of concepts here. This is a question of deep trust and determination. Are we being moved around by our concepts? Where is the great functioning of the Buddha coming from? Where are the calligraphies of Rinzai coming from? It is of course that deepest faith and trust. If we don't see this, we will continue moving blindly. We and this world are not two. We are at One with the whole universe. If we are not there then where are we? Humans can become this state of mind. That is a true life which realizes the real value of a human life and not for oneself but for all beings great energy and life.

The Sixth Patriarch says that this state of Mind of Nirvana cannot be explained, but has to be experienced. And from there the deep faith, believe and trust comes forth. He said I was not going to go this far, but Shido after hearing this broke through completely. Master Daie said this words of the Sixth Patriarch are my state of mind. No need to have further opinions here. Just do it totally and completely.

...7...

The emperor himself had been kidnapped by immigrants and the power in the country was divided between groups in this last era of the Sung dynasty. To be sent into exile meant that you could be of no use to the government even if that was your job, even though one still had the responsibility, there is nothing what one could do. Ryokyonin's brother at the age of 64 and still not enlightened, his insecurity was so strong. He was very honestly practicing and all day long he worked on his Samadhi. Master Daie tells him how impressed he was with his efforts. He said that such passion would open the door of the deepest mind without fail. We all have so much dualistic clutter moving our mind around and there we leave our true nature aside. For realizing our true nature we have to put all that clutter aside during all the basic movements and activities of the day, we have to see it clearly and concentrate, we have to become this place where the picture will transform. Master Daie tells him that his creative work is to not add anything to his perceptions. No descriptions, no mental ideas. We get up in the morning and immediately we have things we need to get accomplished, our external duties become more and we leave our inner work aside. Zazen is to turn this around, not just to soothe our minds and make ourselves feel better from being busy all the time. This is not true Zazen. Our goal is to realize and express that actual base of all beings. This is what our training is for, not to add something that is external. But to look at these questions: what am I? what is life for?

We do not need to look at what is beings seen, but who is doing the seeing. The true master is the truth in every instant. We always look around saying: that is a mountain, that is a river – describing. Missing the wonder of seeing it directly, wondering whether we understand or don't, but when we meet the actual mind, we are astounded at everything we see or hear.

The time when the mental habits fall away is very important. Even among people who are training very sincerely, that ego starts thinning out and they can become very afraid and insecure. This is what Daie Zenji is saying: Don't be afraid. Go straight in one line. Then you won't need to be afraid anymore. Or we wonder whether we can actually do it. Don't be thrown around by those thoughts.

...

Everyday cultivating Samadhi, not constantly towing with our ideas and being attached to illusions. Or why bother sitting! We are always wondering, what is this called and naming things. What flower is this, what is the name of that flower? Always interested in a world of discriminated thinking. And if that were something that would make us have good fortune, that would be one thing. But we keep sitting and thinking, letting our thoughts grow even more. It is not that people who sit simply become quiet. We can become quiet even when we are working. Like a bee's nest that is being shaken. Our mind is full of buzzing thoughts, going here and there in every direction. And when we sit down, all that thinking comes straight to the forefront. Everyone's mind is moved around in just this way, full of confusion and

noise. That is because we do not know our true goal, and even if we do know our true goal, we do not know how to put our life on the line for it. In every moment we have to commit to breaking through completely. At the age of 24, the sixth patriarch heard the words: Abiding nowhere, awakened mind arises. And he was deeply awakened. But this is so rare. We are full of thinking constantly, all of the ancients knew this perfectly well, knowing that we are always thinking in a dualistic way. About understanding or not, and that is why we have to get as simple as possible. Sitting is Samadhi, sweeping is Samadhi, it cannot be some weak kind of practice or it will not be that kind of Zazen that brings us our great breakthrough. Zazen is done by throwing our question into everything we do. We keep using our breath to let go, the length of our exhalation increases, and our concentration sharpens and extra thinking cannot enter. Beginning with Sussokan, we naturally deepen with every breath, and our external thought ceases. We can't keep stopping and starting again. We have to do it to the very end of the whole breath, which is not so easy at the beginning. If we do not do it like this, we will always be thinking about tomorrow and yesterday, and be insecure.

The measurable wavelength of our mind are in action the beta waves, in deep, intuitive Zazen or sleeping the alpha waves. The latter ones are similar to sleep because we have no gaps in sleep either. Our Zazen is the same, when we have gaps, then it is not the alpha wave state. Yet if we can practice the no gap state of mind in the zendo, then it can also be realized outside of the zendo, in our cleaning, in our chanting, in every day activity, without becoming dualistic because our concentration is well cultivated. A little taste of that state of mind is not cultivation, but it has to be done continually. Then we can also use it in our daily life, being like a mirror that reflects things, while not holding onto any part of it. If we can realize this state of mind more and more, then it becomes our second nature and we come closer and closer to meeting our true nature. That true nature which is empty. It is not about ME anymore, and when that ego attachment is being let go of, we can simply stay with it without forcing it. When this kicks in, we can no longer reach with our mental idea, yet perceive everything as it is. What vibrational state everything is, we do not need to use any kind of form, some kind of skillful speech. The point is that we have depth within and we come to see this depth clearly.

Like a child seeing directly, it can't be fooled by the appearance. A child can see his parent's true mind, yet they do not judge it. They are perceptive, receiving the truth of the origin as an actuality, not as something that needs to be judged.

Like master Dogen said: "the sun rises, the moon sets, at dawn every day the cock crows." This is how he described it. Matter of course: Hearing this people might say: That is too obvious, how could you call that the Dharma? But it is this clear obvious actuality how things actually are which we can no longer see. It is not about being

deceived at all. It has to be seen clearly and not deceived, not adding on extra thoughts that confuse us.

Just like master Ryokan says: “When there is a crisis, then a crisis is fine. When there is sickness, then sickness is fine. And when there is dying, then it is that, what is happening, and that is fine.” One would hear this and think that it was a hideous thing to say, but it is the truth. Of course, we get sad when someone dies, but then we feel that we want to make efforts on their behalf, not only seeing for our own small centered interest, but for all beings.