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The Vimalakirti Sutra,
Chapter Six, The Inconceivable Liberation.

This time we read the sixth chapter in the Vimalakirti Sutra, the Inconceivable Liberation. In this chapter, that which is inconceivable and functions inconceivably is made manifest and brought to light. The meaning of inconceivable is not mystery nor mysterious. For us to be conceptual and dualistic in our point of view is so common, to sweep that dualism away completely is the meaning of inconceivable. To realize the state of mind where dualism cannot reach, this is what inconceivable means. Vimalakirti says in this chapter,

“Shariputra thought, all of these Bodhisattvas and disciples are here to listen to this mondo, but they are all having to listen standing up. If it goes on for a long time they will all probably get very tired. Isn't it better to give them some place to sit down?” Shariputra thought this extraneous thought. Vimalakirti read this thought and heard it clearly.

Then Vimalakirti said to Shariputra, “Shariputra, what did you come here to do? Did you come here to hear me talk or did you come here because you wanted a chair? Did you come because you wanted a place to sit down or did you come for the Dharma? Did you come here to sit down in a chair?” This is how he questioned him.

This is something that happens to us often in our daily lives. We go somewhere to meet someone, and our goal is to meet with that person, but more than that we are worried about what we will wear, and what we will take with us. Of course Shariputra answered without hesitation, “No, no I did not come

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here for that! I came here for the Dharma I did not come here for a seat.”

“We have to forget our body completely, let alone to think about sitting down in a chair!”

The Emperor Hanazono did sanzen with Daito Kokushi and we also find this in the words that he left, “Rain, wind and snow are just part of it all.” Emperor Hanazono was living in a very severe era and at that time humans also were unable to trust and believe in each other. Within these circumstances he found his mind's refuge in the Dharma only. He also found his judgment's source in the Dharma and from there he led and guided the country. Everyday hear three truths from Daito Kokushi, just as he said in this poem, for the truth we have to offer is everything that we are. Then and only then will we be able to actually realize the truth. We have to forget our physical body and throw away everything into our body and mind becoming one. It is not about just finding a little time to do this once in a while but to offer our whole life to doing this or we cannot experience the real truth.

Manjusri was visiting Vimalakirti, and because people usually do visits from their own stance, a chair symbolizes that position. Each person wants to prove their position. Yuima Koji wanted each one to let go of that position and share the same time and space rather than their own opinion or stance. If we do not let go of them we cannot truly share and experience and Yuma knew this and had seen through it thoroughly. He did not acknowledge sitting down. Yuma Koji did not allow limited position and decided rank, his great wisdom was in how he refused to be caught by these things. For him the unlimited boundless universe was the chair.

Yuima put his body into the great freedom where there was no problem at all with not having what was not there.

Next Yuima teaches the Dharma and the way of realizing the truth. Interested in the Dharma, he is not interested in attachment to the Buddha, attachment to the Dharma, or attachment to the Sangha.”

To seek the Dharma is to not be attached to any thing to be thankful to. In the Zen way especially as Rinzai Zenji has said,

Someone asked, “What is the karma of the five heinous crimes?”

The master said, “Killing the father, slaying the mother, shedding the blood of a Buddha, destroying the harmony of the sangha, and burning the scriptures and images—this is the karma of the five heinous crimes.”

“What is meant by ‘father’?”

The master said, “Avidya is the father. When the place of arising or extinguishing of a single thought in your mind is not to be found, as with a sound reverberating throughout space, and there is nothing anywhere for you to do—this is called ‘killing the father’.”

“What is meant by ‘mother’?”

The master said, “Covetousness is the mother. When a single thought in your mind enters the world of desire and seeks covetousness, but sees that all dharmas are only empty forms, and [thus] has no attachment anywhere—this is called ‘slaying the mother’.”

“What is meant by ‘shedding the blood of a Buddha’?”

The master said, “When in the midst of the pure dharmadhātu you haven’t in your mind a single reasoning thought, and [thus] pitch blackness pervades everywhere—this is called ‘shedding the blood of a Buddha’.”

“What is meant by ‘destroying the harmony of the sangha’?”

The master said, “When a single thought in your mind truly realizes that the bonds and enticements of the passions are like space with nothing upon which to depend—this is called ‘destroying the harmony of the sangha’.”

“What is meant by ‘burning the scriptures and images’?”

The master said, “When you see that causal relations are empty, that mind is empty, and that dharmas are empty, and [thus] your single thought is decisively cut off and, transcendent, you’ve nothing to do—this is called ‘burning the scriptures and images.’”

In the Record of Rinzai it is written like these especially severe words. In this endless hell with no break the heaviest sins are these five: to kill your mother, to kill your father, to burn the scriptures and the teachings, to kill the Buddha, to break the harmony of the sangha. These are the five heinous crimes, the worst sin a human can commit and which must not be committed no matter what. From the very primitive times of Buddhism this has been a central teaching. And nevertheless here Rinzai Zenji has said that only when we first commit such sins and cause such karma will we be able to become liberated.

This is the very particular an unusual way of teaching in Zen, it must be said. It seems backwards and violent it must be said, to kill the father kill the mother to kill the Buddha, Rinzai Zenji uses words that are putting it as strongly as possible. For children to hold filial piety above everything else were in ancient China the most basic teachings of all moral ideals. These were the words of what were considered most basic in a person’s mind.

In the Dhammapada the Buddha left the words, very strict words, “the parent kills the child, the child kills the parent, the wife kills the husband the husband kills the wife.” Even the Buddha clearly says these same words, so what is meant by mother and father in this context? What is it actually saying? This is what is most important, it is important in a psychological sense. That which is always putting the pressure on us as voice of authority, sometimes

called the father sometimes the mother, is also called the symbol of the king. Rinzai calls the father the great ignorance, darkness of all light. Deep in our mind we all have root ignorance, this complete absence of light from where all of the desires and extraneous thoughts come forth. We have to cut that root from where the desires and extraneous thoughts come forth one after the next. Then for the first time our mind is liberated from the suffering of delusion, if we can cut that root then for the first time we can know that state of mind like a clear-skied autumn day, the sky that extends boundlessly in every direction. Rinzai calls this to kill the father; this is not the literal meaning of killing the father. The Buddha is saying, in essence, the exact same thing. In our mind there is deeply embedded an ego filter that holds its power over us, and we have to cut that, the Buddha is saying.

Rinzai says that the mother is covetousness. No matter how much we have we want more. We want more of everything and don't want to lose anything we have, if we can lose this attachment how much easier our life becomes. Mothers all over the world are praying for the safety of their own child in one straight line. That greediness of the love expressed for the safety of only ones own child, without resolving this our mind will always be attached to something and never be free. Whether it is the Buddha or the Dharma or the Sangha, if we are attached we make a great mistake.

There is a great difference however, between honoring something and being attached to it. To be attached means that there is a small self taking a position in it; while to honor it means there is no small self involved. So this is completely different and people often confuse this. Because of this religions have much confusion because they are not clear on what is being attached to from a small minded ego and what is being honored from a place free from attachment. In this same way people who seek the Dharma have to be clear with their way of being and their stance. This is what is being said here.

Yuima says that no matter what it is, if we are attached to it, even if it is the truth that we are attached to, that is always delusion.

Vimalakirti says to not be attached to anything whatsoever even if it is the truth or some good thing, it will always be delusive. Here it has to be asked, if it is attachment to seek for the truth, to be attached to the truth, what does that mean?

First we have to see the dharma as the serenity of everything extinguished. The Dharma, the truth, is complete extinction and stillness. When everything is extinguished, then we know the comfort of complete serenity. Everything in this whole world is transient, temporary. Nothing is fixed or standing still. Things, which are born, will, without fail, always decay. To be born and to die, these two, these are our world. When those two, birth and death, are gone, then that is the place of the serenity of complete extinction. When there is no more awareness of living or dying, this is the Dharma. Good or bad or happy or sad, to like or to dislike, when these dualistic ideas have gone, there is the Dharma.

At this place because it is very difficult to express, in Zen it is often expressed as the enso, or circle. In a circle there is nothing extra and nothing lacking, the essence of our mind as a human being. Our form might be that of a tall person or a short person, the form of a man or the form of a woman, someone with fine health or someone with a tendency to be sick, our hair color, our eye color, even in our skin color have infinite differences. Nevertheless, in all of our minds, there is nothing lacking, nothing extra. The actuality of our mind itself, in it there is nothing extra and nothing missing. Here it is everything equal. In our mind there is no big and no small. There is no way to possibly explain this. This is why we express it with a perfectly round circle. Because a circle is a zero it is not colored with anything at all.

In the Bible it is written that unless we become the mind of a baby we cannot enter heaven. This is saying the same thing. In a newly born baby there is no coloring or dyeing at all, just as it is at birth, it is empty of any color. Still, to even be born into this world means that there is already differences and differentiations and prejudices present. This is why it is said in Zen reveal that face which is before your parent's birth. This is empty of any color -the dharma cannot be colored or dyed. The Dharma has no awareness at all of having done this or having performed that, such consciousness does not exist

there. If there is any self-conscious awareness it is not the Dharma. It has to be the awareness that is free from any self-conscious awareness. People who dance are not self-conscious about their body. People who play piano are not thinking about their fingers. We are born without thinking about becoming born; this kind of pure awareness is the Dharma.

In the Dharma there is no such dualistic perception of choosing what is strong and not choosing what is weak. Every single thing is accepted exactly as it is. Things are accepted exactly as they are and everything is entrusted, this is the Dharma. This seems as if it would be impossible in our society of today, to let go of all of our position, ideas of good and bad, and judgments - we can't do that! Without those things we cannot live in the world! But these things are not the Dharma. In the Dharma there is no form, there is no place we can go and there we can be given the Dharma. IT is not the kind of thing which depending on where you are you can be given it or not be given it. Anything for which that is the case is not the Dharma. The Dharma is the true faith that we receive in our deepest mind and that deep faith has no form.

That deep faith that has no form is how our zazen has to be as well. The Dharma is not attached to anything or anywhere. As it says in the Diamond Sutra "True mind abiding nowhere arises freely." The Sixth Patriarch was enlightened when he heard these words. If our mind is caught on anything at all, that is not the Dharma. If we are stopped on "good" or stopped on "bad" or caught on "understanding" or caught on "not understanding" this is not the Dharma. The Dharma is not something that we can see with our eyes, or hear with our ears, or that in our mind can be grasped with an idea. The Buddha and God are also not visible with the eyes or audible with the ears, nor can they be touched with the hands. That which can be seen with the eyes, heard with the ears, and touched with the body that is not the Dharma.

The Dharma is dependent on nothing. The idea that 'I want to do this, I want to do it that way', the Dharma is not like that. Forgetting ourselves completely and then, without thinking about it, the functioning comes forth. Each and every thought in

our head, which we have worked in accordance with for so long, which we are so conditioned to and used to functioning in that way, they are only a product of consciousness and no matter how good we think they are, they are not the Dharma. Not our superficial habits or afflictions but all the way to the depths of our very root of survival, we are talking about this most basic level.

It is the same for our physical body, we don't think each time we pick up our chopsticks or hold our rice bowl. We don't mentally perceive it then do it. We move our hands and naturally pick up our chopsticks; this is to depend on nothing. Our eyes see; our ears hear; we smell; we taste; this is all dependent on nothing. Because humans add on ideas of meaning or profit and loss these all become mistaken and caught. Without this all of our activity relies on nothing.

Humans are not meant to think and then do, but to do from that place of not thinking about anything. In society people have to have self-control and if a person is not controlled no one will believe in them, but it is not such a difficult thing to exist. If there are many thoughts in a human then they have a much harder time functioning. This is especially true in zazen. The more we want to do good zazen the more difficult it becomes, the more we want to do good breathing, then the more difficult the breathing becomes. We try to work hard and look good in our surrounding circumstances, we try to move looking good and the more we do this the more we get clumsy and goof-up in clumsiness. Humans acting naturally without thinking, that functioning is in all of us, to work without even thinking we are working. We think that to leave it up to nature is haphazard, it may look that way, but this is the truest way of using our body and mind. Vimalakirti then says here to Shariputra, "Thereupon, reverend Shariputra, if you are interested in the Dharma, you should take no interest in anything." He calls to Shariputra and says that no matter what Dharma; it cannot be sought after. That which cannot be sought after is the Dharma. This is how he taught.

In Osaka in Nishinomiya there is a temple called Ebisusama. At New Year many go to pray at Ebisusama and offer to the God enshrined there all of the misfortune of the forthcoming year. Everyone

joyfully gathers there, “wansa wansa”, and comes to pray at the shrine there. One person came to pray to this Eastern Sea Ebisu. He stayed there in the shrine all night long praying to be given good fortune. He made this deep vow and request. God came forth and manifested and said, Look for yourself, I have never given any good fortune to anyone, look around you, I am one who is always receiving good fortune, look at the money all over the place here, all of these offerings. I always receive good fortune I do not know anything about giving it. After I was born I was set afloat in a boat in the ocean by my parent Gods, and set to sea. Then some fishermen in Nishinomiya Bay found me and they saved my life. I am very thankful and feel how precious this was! Even I who was rejected by my parent Gods, there is someone who would pick me up and save me! Every day I am so thankful and have to smile and in living in that way good fortune gathered, it is just like that. I have no memory of ever having given anyone any good fortune at all. If you want good fortune then just live thankfully and joyfully and you too, without needing to ask from someone else, you will see that already you are blessed with much good fortune. You have this body and today’s life; you can live and please be thankful for that. That gratitude and that joy, when you can feel that deeply you will be giving good fortune to everyone around you. If you start asking and receiving them for yourself you will be resented by people around you. Without receiving anything themselves they will feel they are becoming more and more unfortunate. But if you live every single day in gratitude, smiling and laughing, then people around you will always feel how fortunate you feel, and they too will be asking you to give them good fortune, you will feel this. Without doing anything at all you will become someone who can give blessings to other people. When there is anything at all to seek, there is always suffering. In not even seeking the truth, there is the real truth. In this way he was taught by Ebisu san. It is exactly this place that Vimalakirti is teaching as well. When Vimalakirti taught in this way, everyone who hear this teaching all of the 500 disciples. All of them could be touched by the Dharma and they could receive the eye that sees the Dharma. They each received that splendid eye that perceives true Dharma.

“Manjusri! You have walked a very wide world and come back with much experience from doing so, haven’t you? In some Buddha land somewhere did you not see some wonderful gorgeous chair that was so comfortable to sit in?” In this way Vimalakirti asked Manjusri.

Manjusri then said, “Vimalakirti! I did! In a country to the East of here, thirty-six gogasha there is a country called Shumiso. The King of this country is called Shumi Doobutsu. He is there now and teaching the Dharma and 84000 people there are sitting in chairs that are 84000 feet high very splendid fine chairs.” In this way he answered Vimalakirti’s question. The Vimalakirti immediately used his supernatural powers. Then 32000 of those splendid chairs appeared. They flew into his room of four and one half mats. In that room all of the bodhisattvas and great disciples and four guardian gods and all the heavenly gods, all of them had gathered. There were many people gathered, and no one had ever seen anything that looked like this before and were very astonished. While 32000 chairs fit into this room, it was still wide open and spacious and in the town nearby the people did not feel any narrowness or restricted feeling either. It was very strange and mysterious!

Then Vimalakirti said to Manjusri, “Please sit down”, and he offered him a seat. The Bodhisattvas who knew how to use supernatural powers made their bodies the size to sit in the chairs of 42000 feet high. These great chairs could be sat in immediately by these Bodhisattvas but the less ripe Bodhisattvas and the great disciples could not get up onto those chairs and were wandering here and there. Then Vimalakirti said, “Shariputra, you wanted a chair so much-please please! Sit down please!”

Shariputra then said “Vimalakirti! The chairs are too big and I cannot climb up onto them.”

Vimalakirti said to him, “Shariputra. Of course you cannot just simply sit down on this chair, if you want to sit down on this chair, then face the place from where this chair was sent, Shumito, you have to prostrate in the direction of that place and then you will be able to climb up onto that chair. Finally all of the Bodhisattvas and the main disciples all faced in the direction of Shumito and prostrated. They put

their hands together and bowed and prostrated. Then, very mysteriously their bodies got bigger and bigger and they were able to sit in the chairs that were 42000 feet in height.

The guests that were invited, and as in the tea ceremony there is a special seat for the main guest, even if there are many invited guests, there is a specific place where the guest of honor sits. But everyone held back from sitting there and kept saying to another person, “no you should sit there, please sit down there! No, YOU sit there. Please sit down there! It is you who should be sitting in the seat of the guest of honor.” Everyone was being reserved and trying to go after the other person. Everyone was so busy doing this that a resolution was having a very difficult time being settled on. This takes so much time and we never get to have tea.

Then one person with wisdom and courage will finally say, “I am not worthy of such a seat but if no one will sit there, then this unworthy me will sit here, please excuse me. Saying that he sits down and bows his head and everyone understands and gets it. In this way people have to see a place, see how it is at that moment in that place, and right there, not sitting down arrogantly but with wisdom and courage and with one’s humble mind they sit down.

Sitting down is about our own wisdom and how our mind actually is. If we get caught on our small self, and attached to our personal position, we cannot sit down. In this way Shariputra said to Vimalakirti being very impressed, Vimalakirti isn’t this mysterious! How could so many chairs be in such a small room like this? How could this have happened, and in this quiet town of Vaisali it is not in the slightest way obstructing or interrupting anything either!

In the places that we live, in the countries to the east and west and north and south, all of the gods do not feel it narrow at all, and feeling very impressed by this Shariputra addressed him.

Vimalakirti then said, Shariputra. The Buddha and the Bodhisattvas are awakened and liberated. This kind of inconceivable thing is a matter of course for them; this is the inconceivable liberation. Without holding on to any position of a small self you always, in every space that you exist, you always match it perfectly.

Being able to use your mind in this way, to awaken to this then you can do this wherever you stand. For one who has awakened, even if you put the whole world into a poppy seed, the world does not increase or decrease. And those who live on the earth will not have any idea of how big a thing this is. In the quality ‘being enlightened’ there is this curious aspect.

Further Vimalakirti said to Shariputra “Reverend Shariputra, for the Tathagathas and the bodhisattvas, there is a liberation called ‘Inconceivable.’ They have great supernormal powers. Thus, a bodhisattva who lives in the inconceivable liberation can magically transform any kind of living being into a universal monarch, a Lokapala, a Sakra, a Brahma, a disciple, a solitary sage, a bodhisattva, and even into a Buddha. A shomon or a heavenly god can be manifest into as well. In the Kannon sutra it tells how Kannon Sama can manifest into thirty-three different forms. When we know the inconceivable liberation then we can manifest anything at all from our minds. That is because originally our mind is empty.”

In Hakuin Zenji’s Song of Zazen it is written, “Knowing the form of no form as form whether going or returning we cannot go anywhere else.” Originally we are not male, female, a good person or a bad person, completely equal with no discrimination among us is what we are from the origin. That differentiation begins, and in those people, among who there were no differences, one becomes a politician, a guard man, one becomes a policeman, one becomes a thief, one becomes a driver, or the customer. They all express different form. They all observe their various positions. Master Joshu said of this “Knowingly they transgress.”

He said it in this way. In words of old Japan it says how menial and low class is the form of one taking their bottle to go out and buy some sake, it does not look like the appearance of the master of the house. Yet when they get home and change into a kimono and put on their lounging jacket over their kimono and come out to the guests and serve that sake in a splendid manner, the master of the household is what they appear to be. At home, doing the daily chores, such as firing the wood bath, but at work, a top class CEO. Sometimes we are a busy hardworking young monk and sometimes the high-ranking priest in

a fancy koromo. In the morning wiping down the hallways and doing laundry and cleaning the bathrooms being a hardworking housewife but in the evening with a gorgeous gown we are at the fancy party, there is no such fixed form of how we have to be in life.

If we stop and think about it life is really like a play on a stage, the same person becomes the feudal lord, then becomes the hero, the samurai, the town head, the murderer, the murdered, we can become any role, and then when backstage we are again just one of the group. There is no reason to be conceited because we were the feudal lord, and just because we were one of the low class workers in the play does not mean we have to be reserved now. On stage there has to be a splendid lord and a pitiful beggar, but back stage there is no resentment or feeling inferior or any kind of ranking leftover from the stage. When we play a role, we play it seriously throwing ourselves into it completely, when we finish playing that role there is nothing left to be caught on whatsoever. This is the inconceivable liberation. This way of doing life, because people don't realize it, we get caught and attached.

Next Vimalakirti said "The bodhisattva can transform miraculously all the cries and noises, superior, mediocre, and inferior, of all living beings of the ten directions, into the voice of the Buddha, with the words of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, having them proclaim, 'Impermanent! Miserable! Empty! Selfless!' And he can cause them to recite the words and sounds of all the teachings taught by all the Buddhas of the ten directions."

Previously he had been talking about transforming how we are externally, now he is talking about transforming what comes to us internally, with something like a sound, whether it is a high or low or middle range sound, a loud or soft sound, it can all be made to be the sound of the voice of the Buddha.

"The mountain - Buddha's body. The torrent - his preaching. Last night, 84,000 poems. How, how make them understand? "

These are the enlightenment words of Sotoba. Having stayed all night on Rosan Mountain, he heard the river's sound and it was the teaching of the Buddha. When the dawn came, he saw the

mountain's color and he received it as the Buddha's body. He had heard the Buddha's teaching from the night before, and received his body, but how could he possibly share it with others? How would they understand?

The sound of the rain, the sound of the wind, the sound of the babbling stream, the sound of the Japanese song lark, all of them are the voice of the Buddha. The voice that praises, the voice that insults, a crying voice, a laughing voice, all of these are giving voice to the voice of the Buddha. This is all the inconceivable liberation.

Here the Great Kasho, one of the Buddha's ten top disciples, Kasho Sonja, heard this teaching and said, "This is a very important teaching, I have never heard such a teaching before! This is a splendid and very fine teaching!"

Then, the patriarch Mahakasyapa, having heard this teaching of the inconceivable liberation of the bodhisattvas, was amazed, and he said to the venerable Shariputra, "Venerable Shariputra, if one were to show a variety of things to a person blind from birth, he would not be able to see a single thing. Likewise, venerable Shariputra, when this door of the inconceivable liberation is taught, all the disciples and solitary sages are sightless, like the man blind from birth, and cannot comprehend even a single cause of the inconceivable liberation. Who is there among the wise when hearing about this inconceivable liberation, does not conceive the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment? As for us, whose faculties are deteriorated, like a burned and rotten seed, what else can we do if we do not become receptive to this great vehicle? We, all the disciples and solitary sages, upon hearing this teaching of the Dharma, should utter a cry of regret that would shake this billion-world-galactic universe! And as for the bodhisattvas, when they hear of this inconceivable liberation they should be as joyful as a young crown prince when he takes the diadem and is anointed, and they should increase to the utmost their devotion to this inconceivable liberation. Indeed, what could the entire host of Maras ever do to one who is devoted to this inconceivable liberation?"

When the patriarch Mahakasyapa had uttered this discourse, thirty-two thousand gods conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment.

Shariputra then said to Kasho, “Just like trying to tell a person who is blind about a beautiful thing, to preserve your own state of mind like the person who practices the Hinayana way, for one who only is concerned with one’s own enlightenment and salvation, this inconceivable liberation will not be possible to be understood even if they hear it. Even if you offer them this teaching they will not be able to understand it. However, if someone with wisdom, one who understands religion deeply hears this teaching, if they hear it with a huge mind, an all embracing mind, they will hear that this is true religion and their deep vow to awaken all beings will be inspired. We of the Hinayana, without hearing the teaching of the truth such as this, are like a rotten seed that will never give forth a sprout.”

To awaken the great vow to give up all of your own personal things and offer everything to liberating the suffering in society, just by having this state of mind we are liberated. This is what this teaching offers. It is not about having to observe precepts or we will not be liberated, this is a very hard place for people of the Hinayana path to grasp.

The world that Vimalakirti is teaching here is that of the mind of the Bodhisattva Vow. In the Bible it teaches in this way, “if one grain of wheat falls onto the ground, if it does not die, it is just one grain of wheat. But, if it dies, it can become great sheaves of wheat.” This new growth of wheat comes forth from that. This is the Mind of the Bodhisattva Vow.

But people have this hard shell of ego. This hard shell is difficult to break, one grain of wheat falls to the ground, and it does not die, it has a shell on it, and if that shell does not fall off, then new wheat sprouts will not come forth. It is only when that shell is broken, and new life energy is given birth that infinite life can be cultivated. We attempt to protect that hard shell, and of course that egg’s shell of a chicken egg is a very important layer for protecting the life inside. If there were no egg, then life inside the egg would flow away. But, even if it is an important shell, we cannot hold that precious shell forever or the life energy inside will rot.

This shell has to be broken through and then the life energy inside can come surging out. Everyone has such a shell of a “my self” we have to break through that shell and then the new life energy can come forth, we spread our wings and join great nature, this is what is most important. But this shell is not so easy to break through and get rid of. When the pecking of the beak of the mother and the growth of the chicken inside both ripen to the exact right place, then the eggshell breaks. Because we can break through that shell we can awaken to the love for all beings, knowing that great love of God and that birth of new life.

There is a way in which we try to balance our own ego-shelled life, with the usual social mores and manners and rules, but there is a greater life energy that exists simultaneously and gives us greater functioning and we have to realize that great ki.

Again Kasho Sonja says, “If people of the Hinayana path knew this way of the Mahayana, they would say that this as a ridiculous teaching, it is the teaching of devils. But if they understood this teaching well they would know its great joy and devils could do nothing about it.” In this way the Great Kasho spoke.

“You say that even the devils could not do anything about it but those devils become Mara and other kinds of devils as well, you know!” Vimalakirti spoke thus. What Vimalakirti is saying is that in society devils are usually thought about as something bad but that is not the case. In fact, devils are also Bodhisattvas.

In the Bible it is written that when Christ was taken to the top of the mountain it was the devil that tested Christ’s mind. The devil came to the top of the mountain and showed him the whole world and said to Christ that if Christ would become the devils disciple he would give him the whole world. This will all be yours. To this Christ answered, “Devil, get thee behind me!” and he rejected him. Devils have this kind of power, which means that devils are also Bodhisattvas. A devil is not something that exists in this world, but Bodhisattvas make use of the form of the devil in order to challenge our clear mind.

It is also written in the sutras like this. There was a devil named Rasetsu. There was also one person of training there. The person of training had practiced

for many, many years, seeking the truth and struggling hard. Rasetsu was chanting a chant, "All things in this world are always changing, and all things will come to an end. This is the truth of this world, and there is nothing in this world that can separate from this truth"

This is what Rasetsu was chanting and the disciple was amazed at hearing this and said "that is how it is! I know that!" You are chanting that so you know that state of mind. Maybe you have heard that truth somewhere then? Do you know that truth? And if you do-won't you tell it to me too? That chant has four lines, please teach them all to me!" He entreated him in this way." I beg you! "

Rasetsu said to him "Right now I am so hungry!"

"Oh that's right you are the kind of devil that eats human flesh! That is perfect. I will give you my body and you can tell me the truth of the chant."

Rasetsu then chanted- When all of the delusion and confusion and dualism of living and dying, of good or bad, of profit and loss, when these dualistic thoughts are over, when we can let go of all of our thoughts of them, when we can leave them, we can suddenly see something that says "Oh! So that is how it is! I thought there was some truth in those, something way over there, but it is that very awareness that I give birth to, that very source of awareness, this is what has to be touched this is what has to be cut. Then just as it is, that is the truth!

Rasetsu had his mouth open and was waiting but before that, the disciple was able to realize the truth directly. He cut his finger and with the drops of blood from the cut finger he wrote the chant on a leaf nearby, and then he dove into the mouth of the waiting Rasetsu. At that very instant Rasetsu revealed that he was Taishakuten, the heavenly king. Rasetsu was only a form he had taken to test the person of training.

Kansei san, on the 15th of February, ended his ninety-seven year old life very peacefully. In 1959, he came to Sogenji and from that time on, for a period of forty-five years, he lived every day at Sogenji. He led his life in the austere way of a Zen monk, he was poor, and considered poverty as a matter of course and naturally made that the basis of his life. Sogenji had a very severe economic situation; there were very few people to support it financially with almost no congregation, yet he did well to protect this temple.

Kansei san was also the head tea master of the Bizen Ryu Tea School. In the 34th year of Showa (1959) he became the head Master of the Bizen Ryu Tea School of the tea line begun by Haru Masako, which continues down to today. Being a head tea master was a job that he did fully for forty years. The Bizen Ryu tea teachers, he took care of all of them and at New Year's there would be always the first tea ceremony of the New Year and the people in training at Sogenji would help and even today this custom is continued.

In May there is the examination, the test for becoming a licensed tea teacher. The disciples come and take this test and in the autumn there is a yearly tea ceremony honoring the founder of Bizen Ryu, Haru Masako. Many people's karmic affiliations were held very precious in the doing of all of these things. He was very severe and austere, living simply and basically. If there were a mistake made he would reprimand and correct it on the spot.

For the people of training he was an example of how to be, and in the drinking of tea, the correct way of drinking tea properly he corrected and reprimanded without reserve teaching very carefully and meticulously. He always held teaching of how humans should be and humans true harmony as most important. This is how he lived his life.

When I first came here to Sogenji, he lived in Sogenji alone and did all of the cleaning of the buildings and grounds completely alone. This is truly a huge job, from the front of the main gate all the way to the kitchen area. If you really do this right, you have to

start at 8am in the morning and work straight through the whole morning, and if you do weeding it would take one whole month, and even if you are diligent by the time you get back to the same place the weeds will have been back already.

When there were ceremonies held the people of the Bizen Tea School would come and help and that is how ceremonies were held.

Kansei san was born in Keijo in Korea, although he is a Japanese citizen, he also lived in China for forty years, then he went to the monastery at Myoshinji and trained there for ten years. During that time he almost continually came to train from China. In this context he was a born international citizen perhaps.

His father was a tea and flower teacher so he loved tea. In Sogenji people have come from all over the world and that karmic affiliation people would come and call on him and no matter who would come and visit he would welcome them "Have a cup of tea!" and he would serve them tea. Among the people who come to Sogenji from all over the world, Kansei san was famous. Kansei san, Kansei san was how everybody addressed him; no one even knew his name was Yokoi Ippo. Sogenji's people of training are people from countries all over the world and they would take care of Kansei san's daily needs. While we tried to have people taking care of him who could speak the same language, of course the customs of different countries vary and so each and every detail had to be explained or many things could not be done. This had to be done again and again in order to teach people. Within that he also spoke broken English and taught everyone the manners of tea ceremony and the way of being and drinking tea for tea ceremony, the people of training here were all taught by him.

When I would go to another country to teach zazen, he would say, "this is very important work you are doing. I will be healthy and fine so please go with no concern for me." He would always send me off at the entrance way, While I was gone I even heard that he sometimes would go to the zendo and sit together with the people of training doing zazen together. He always took great responsibility when I

was gone. When I returned he would report to me that everyone had done zazen well while I was gone. Each day this was continued and his way of being that way every day was deeply impressive for people who came here.

Twenty-three years ago when I came to Sogenji there was a very difficult moment when we were not sure if he would still be with us tomorrow and the next day. After that time who can say why, maybe he had just passed through the most difficult valley, he had a few injuries and sicknesses, but, his core was extremely healthy and sturdy and it even seemed possible that he might live till he was one hundred.

At the age of seven years old he left his parents side and became independent in his life, this was very hard and severe. Tairei Roshi was the teacher with whom he trained and he was very strong on independence so always he had to go into his life in a forward thinking way. One example of this was that in order not to become senile, he would remember classic poetry. Without using a dictionary to look up words and kanji that he had forgotten, he would write them down on paper over and over again until he finally remembered them and practiced in this way. At nighttime when he could not sleep at night he would look all over the house for something to sew or mend, and he would use his time well. Sometimes he would have a very good time by himself thinking up things creatively, saying poverty is the mother of discovery. He was an idea man and very strict. In order not to lose his own powers of judgment and discernment he did not watch television, and enjoyed reading instead. When he read a lot he would read a book a day, and so it was a very busy job to do the shopping for his books.

When he was hospitalized he would always pursue the doctor with questions all about his condition. Until he could really understand he would not let up with the questions. Then he would say, "to live is to be patient." "Life is plus minus zero, there is no one who has a whole life of only bad things and there are also no people who have a wholly bad life either."

At 97 in the spring, in the full blossoming of the weeping cherry tree that he had planted himself, he enjoyed himself 4:14 in the morning, the disciples surrounded him and he chanted his own sutra and entered unconsciousness naturally. On the fifteenth of April at three minutes past twelve midnight, he quietly took his last breath.

His teacher Tairei Roshi had told him, that people who are disciples of the Buddha do not have to obey the rules of people in the world, and do not have to have a funeral. When things are all completed, hold important that everyone is informed. This is what his teacher had said to him so only his disciples and the people of training here sent him off.

With great and deep respect and gratitude I report this.

Kansei san drew his own picture of zazen and next to it wrote "One whole life, Carrying the board"

The meaning of this phrase, which is from the common people in China, is that we carry a big board for our whole life and never see the other side. We don't see anything but ourselves, this is the usual meaning, but as Zen words it means to be in the samadhi of chanting the Buddhas name, or zazen Samadhi, or tea Samadhi, or cooking samadhi. Cleaning, raising children, budo, sports; without samadhi none of these can be of value. Samadhi is of the greatest importance to do a whole life carrying a board is to live a whole life doing it in one straight line. This is truly the way Kansei san fulfilled his life. Thank you very much.

Sogenji Osesshin Schedule 2004

August	6-10	Kosesshin
	17-23	Kosesshin
	28-9/3	Kosesshin
September	7-11	Kosesshin
	15-19	Kosesshin
	24-30	Osesshin
October	5-9	Kosesshin
	16-22	Osesshin
	26-30	Kosesshin
November	4-10	Kosesshin
	15-21	Osesshin
	25-29	Kosesshin

December	4-10	Rohatsu
	14-20	Osesshin
	24-28	Kosesshin

For Sesshin information contact sogenji@po.harenet.ne.jp

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