

# 普源一滴水

Number 60

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From Shodo Harada Roshi, Abbot of Sogenji, Okayama, Japan

## New Years Message

2003 New Year's greetings. To all of the people who are good friends of One Drop Zendo and to all of those with karmic affiliation to One Drop Zendo, I send wishes for a happy New Year from Sogenji. Since Rohatsu sesshin of last year, followed by the December reworking sesshin, 45 people of training have been sitting together, supporting each other. All of them wanting to realize the Buddha's true law, and make use of this most excellent season have trained together here.

The celebration of the winter solstice and mochi making, ringing the New Year bell, welcoming the New Year, the first of everything, in front of the altar of Daruma Daishi. Opening this New Year together in front of Daruma Daishi and then in vowing to do our training every more energetically we joined in a special tea, honoring this good fortune. At that time the poem that was given was:

*To celebrate the new spring  
At the ancient Zen temple*

*From East and West they gather,  
The Ones of Iron resolve*

*More than the ritual sacrifice of many lambs' lives  
The Great Vow energy is prized*

*The Dharma Light once again radiates  
Throughout One Thousand Worlds*

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*To celebrate the new spring  
At the ancient Zen temple*

*From East and West they gather,  
The Ones of Iron resolve*

This New Year, in front of the statue of Daruma Daishi and with the 42 in attendance there we celebrated this great joy. When we all gather here to do training, these

are those of the iron foreheads with their deep mind of the vow their highest priority. Centered and anchored, not looking right and left at this and that. Without hesitating without distraction, to vow to realize that true path in one straight line. With firmest decision to realize our mind's true source and with everything we have and can muster to seek these people are gathered here. This is truly an international gathering from around the world, from America, from Europe, from Asia, from every place they have come and are continuing their training.

*More than the ritual sacrifice of many lambs' lives  
The Great Vow energy is prized*

In this way every year the New Year's vow is celebrated but this cannot just be a ritual and formality. At the time of Confucius there were many coup d'etat and the top position was always changing hands. When there was a new emperor, the people were never really clear about their position and at the same time the almanac would also change. When the almanac changed it meant that a new head of state had been recognized. The almanac was issued on the first of the month along with the changes of policy and in recognition and celebration there was a ceremony on that day. A lamb was always sacrificed on that day. This year is also the year of the sheep or lamb in the Chinese calendar.

The almanac would change over time as the emperor changed and each time the new era was welcomed with this ceremony and a great vow. Since the ceremony was also held at the first of each month, it become automatic and repetitive and finally the meaning dried up. There was a man named Shiken who said that he felt so sorry for the lambs that were sacrificed. He called attention to the fact that at the very beginning of every month a lamb was being slaughtered. If there was a true renewal of determination connected with this then maybe he could understand it, but the meaning was long gone and only the ritual remained. He felt that this was pointless, and spoke that the ceremony should also be ended.

Confucius said to this, "You have deepest regret for the lambs, but I deeply regret for that law. You feel sorry for the lives of the lambs, and that is no mistake, their fate is a pitiful thing. Yet, for me, were the law to disappear because of the lamb would be even sadder. For should that happen then the law will no longer be observed."

If there is a law even barely alive then at some time, in some place the law can be brought back to life. If we end it all then there will never be any possibility of rebirth of our state of mind. From these words we see that even if something becomes ritualized, that can still be the source of a rebirth opportunity. This is the meaning of the Confucian metaphor. This is truly the way to view the bows we do every year in front of Daruma Daishi. We celebrate it and it must not become ritualized. Every single person must have the deepest power of the great vow to realize the true law of mind. Those who are gathered here are those of great vow energy and deepest resolve. The people with this essence are gathered here.

*The Dharma Light once again radiates  
Throughout One Thousand Worlds*

As long as there are still those who are living in this way then the way of Zen and the Buddha Dharma and the truth of the Buddha's awakening will be once again brought into this world and give it great radiance.

In the olden times there was in China a great master name Ummon Daishi who once faced a large assembly of disciples. Ummon addressed the assembly and said, "I am not asking you about the days before the fifteenth of the month. But what about after the fifteenth? Come and give me a word about those days."

These fifteen days could be from the 15th of July or the 15th of January, it is not about which month, but what is important here is that what is past is no longer dwelt upon. Rather, at THIS very instant - how do you live? Say it! Speak it! This is what he was asking. We do not need to dwell on what happened last year once this New Year has begun. We welcome the New Year and decide what state of mind we will train with this year and in what way we will do our training from now.

Each of us has to manifest our own clear determination and clarify our essence. Master Ummon was asking that in this way. To make a change like this of 180 degrees is the way of the Buddha Dharma. Things that are past we have to let flow by in the river. If we are always going over and over and over the same old past events, our mind becomes stagnant and soon we will be destroyed. The world is full of grumbling and discontent because of this. Instead, always be new, and new again, always flowing.

As it says in the Diamond Sutra, "The mind which is past has already gone, so we cannot bring it back. The mind of the future is not here yet, so it is nothing but imagination and not the truth." We talk about a now, but that is also changing and flowing away. In every single instant that actuality changes and exists anew. Our healthy mind and behavior and judgment are never caught on a past or a future and are not cushioned by our imagination. They are not even caught on what is the circumstance of right now, but rather flow like water, always transforming with the reality of this very moment.

"But what about after the fifteenth? Come and give me a word about those days." Not making any problem of what has already gone by or what is to come-what about right now? Cut away everything of the past! How about today? Master Ummon said these words to 500-700 monks and no one came up with a single word. Master Ummon ended up having to answer his own question, saying, "Every day is a good day". Nobody could answer so I will have to say it myself, "Every day is a good day."

Every single day is truly a fine day, a paradise, the promised land and full of great good fortune. In this way Master Ummon replied. Of course these words are so famous, "every day is a good day", and everyone knows them. These words are easy and wonderful and feel good to hear with our ears and make us feel so hopeful and happy, but it also depends on how we interpret them. If it can be resolved in the daily world with just that, that would be fine, if merely that could make us all happy and lucky, then just by saying those words, we wouldn't have to suffer. But Master Ummon is not does not offer these words in their superficial sense. For Master Ummon, even if a ball of fire comes flying at us from up in the sky, still, "Every day is a good day". Can we really receive everything that comes along in that way? If right in front of our eyes our own child is about to be hit and killed, standing where we cannot stand to be, from within our incessant tears, can we actually say "Every day is a good day" and accept everything that comes along? If we are told that our husband will die tomorrow, can we really still say, "Every day is a good day"? That which we have collected as possessions over many years, when it is all taken away in one fell swoop, can we really say, "Every day is a good day". Ninety days of training doesn't make our whole environment and everything in it change; our world is the same. A world is full of hate and resentment and conflict and contradiction - with joy and cruelty and has things we love, but also things we hate. While some gain some always lose, it seems so unfair, yet while living in a world like this, can we still say, "Every day is a good day"?

One of great merit like Master Ummon can say words like this. One who has tasted the worst possible conditions of life and drunk them all down, including the worst possible scenes, he can say, "Every day is a good day."

As Zen Master Ryokan wrote "When there is catastrophe, catastrophe is fine, when there is good weather, good weather is fine, when we are sick, sickness is fine when we die, dying is fine."

Master Ryokan says it like this and these are the very words of Master Ummon, no matter what comes along, to accept it. If we are seriously ill, then become a sick person completely. Even if we are told we are going to be murdered, to receive it, just as it is. We need to be able to see this in this way firmly and clearly or our life will stay insecure every day. For this our mind has to become completely "Mu", or we cannot do this.

Master Mumon Ekai said that we have to do that Mu with all of our 360 smallest joints and our 84,000 hair pores. Does our body really have 360 small joints and 84,000 pores? That means that with every bone in our body and all the way down to our pores, we have to receive that Mu with everything we. We have to throw our whole being into that, from the bottoms of our feet to the top of our head. We throw it all into being that and realize this great doubt of Mu, we realize this absolute Mu, this state of mind, and this is the truth of "Every day is a good day". This is what we are being told how to do here. We become this "Mu", the very truth of it, with our whole mind and whole body. We become the total concentration of this Mu, becoming it completely.

We continue for twenty-four hours doing it from morning until night, becoming a complete fool engrossed in that Mu, without a single gap. We keep our awareness on that one point of Mu; we thoroughly become the very breath of Mu. It is not about understanding a "Mu" in our heads. It is not about a conceptual mind game of what it means to become nothing at all. In raising each hand and lowering each foot, we keep that Mu with each motion-seeing something, hearing a sound, feeling something, we do it with our entire body from morning until night, from night until morning. Whether we are sitting or standing, no matter what we are doing, we continue actualizing this. It becomes as if we have a bright red burning hot iron ball that we have put in our mouth and we cannot swallow it down nor can we spit it out. With this state of mind we keep it going until there is no awareness of anything but that Mu. We have to do it to this point, doing it completely to this point is what is most important.

As Rinzi Zenji says, people in the world think that we do zazen and do practice and so then we get enlightened, and that is why we do zazen. This idea is a big mistake. In twenty or thirty years an ignorant person doesn't become Buddha. We are so full of desires! Just look at us! If we don't eat and sleep we get so hungry and just have to sleep. That is not Buddhism at all. We have to see that from the origin we have all already had *this*, and are missing nothing whatsoever. It is not about having a Buddha Nature once we get

enlightened. We have to believe firmly that we always have had this Buddha Nature. Even if we are not among the faithful and even if Buddha and God don't come to get us, we know we never have had any reason to be concerned and this is true of all sentient beings. We do not do training to become a Buddha. From our first birth cry we are Buddha and this is what Rinzi is teaching us.

To try to become a Buddha or to try to become the Dharma is a way to hell. To think that these are outside of us is also a ticket to hell. To seek for a Bodhisattva, or something special, or something to be thankful for, or to do something good for people in the world, or to try to make merit, this is all making more karma. The Buddhas and the patriarchs are people who do not have this kind of confusion in their mind. Rinzi is clear on this. Someone who does not find it necessary to hold on to such things, we call a Buddha or a patriarch.

There are many ways to hold on to the concept of the thirty-two marks of the Buddha, or a concept of nirvana, or the Four Noble Truths of birth, sickness, old age and death, and concept of the twelve karmic links such as Chinese medicine or naikan introspection. One can look at a pine tree, or a body of fresh water, or concentrate on a bells' sound to align the mind. One can look straight within or attempt to not give rise to one single thought, but if this is what Zen amounts to then it is only a conceptual human activity. Rinzi Zenji says this exhaustively.

The Nembutsu practice founder Shinran Shonin said the same thing. All things becoming Buddha, to have such a dualistic idea is a great mistake. Only to not even think about whether you will be saved or not, to only continue the Nembutsu (repeating of the Buddha's name) completely and totally, that is all there is to do.

"It is said that repeating Nembutsu will give us birth in the pure land but I know nothing of that, nor do I know that it might be something to give us karma to go to hell. I don't know anything about those or about anything whatsoever." Shinran Shonin who can say it this way is certainly doing it totally. We are told to do the Nembutsu but that kind of repeating of the Nembutsu is actually not so simple and casual. To do it thinking we will get this or that and wondering why we have to do it and wondering what we will get out of it—we all have thoughts like that but there is no true Nembutsu when we are thinking that!

Even in doing the Nembutsu I might fall into hell, as Honen Shonin said, even if I died and went to hell from saying that I will have no regrets whatsoever. It has to be this firm. It is not about doing the Nembutsu and going to heaven, even if we say it and go to hell to not have one single regret. Why is that? Because there is no other practice that I can do, I cannot do some kind of splendid practice, so going to hell is a given for

me, for me there can only be Nembutsu even if it takes me to hell. Because I believe totally in Shinran Shonin's words whether I go to heaven or hell is of no concern. How few can believe this thoroughly and completely! It is not a simple path. Have we truly actualized our Mu to that degree? Zazen is not for developing power of samadhi. Nor is it to become a Buddha nor is it for realizing kensho. These are irrelevant. Doing our Mu will we go to hell or heaven? Will we be enlightened or not? Why do we do this Mu? To throw away everything completely and totally and then it becomes Nembutsu as well.

For those who are left there is only to do the Nembutsu. It is the only path to follow, to become, to do, and to realize; there is nothing but this! We have to be able to realize this, or else we cannot casually say, "Everyday is a good day". To do one whole week of Osesshin is to demand that of ourselves and sanzen is to get rid of all those ideas of good or bad, to take them all right out from under us. Doing zazen without sanzen, zazen's essence gets distant. Again and again taking it all out from under us until there is nothing whatsoever left to say and there is only that "Mu", that "Namu shaka muni butsu". It cannot be done only with our head. Because we still don't become totally serious and we cannot realize it completely. We have to do it totally and completely in this way.

To do it to where we cannot possibly retreat is that world of swallowing down a red hot iron ball, to the right the sea of fire and to the left the hell of water, and there is one small narrow path there that goes on, that continues and that is the path of the Nembutsu. The Pure Land sect teaches this way and it is the same for our Mu. Continually doing that Mu is the only help we have and when it gets to this point, there is no more division into "self power" and "other power". Only by arriving here can the deepest faith be born. Everything else disappears but this. Then the deep faith is born. Our true life energy is then realized directly and clearly. What is important is this deep direct experience and all religions are the same when they come to here. There are contradictory things taught by religions but here we drink down those distinctions and differences and dive into where we cannot hold on to such differences and distinctions and go to the world of deepest belief and faith. Here no more ideas nor dualistic distinctions can remain, or "Everyday is a good day" becomes only a concept and a pat phrase.

From morning until night we have to just do that Mu in one straight line, becoming it completely until we burn up every last one of our arguments and explanations. Then that which has burned these all out will do the cleaning of the muck and murk and spit out all of the mozo. We can then know the mind that for the first time, that mind which is the clear pure mind with which we were born.

"To see with the ears and hear with the eyes is beyond any doubt. The sound of the raindrops dripping from the eaves."

This is a poem of Daito Kokushi. It is a matter of course that our ears hear and our eyes see, going way beyond that when we perceive the raindrops from the eaves falling, it is not a world of mental understanding. They fall drip, drip, drip, and this is not a mental concept but an actuality. They fall. Only hear that actuality. We can hear it even if we do not try to hear it. Just because we have kensho does not mean that we can see and hear them. Even if we do not do zazen they drop and we can hear them. If they fall we can hear them and that is our original nature and clear mind.

During all the twenty-four hours of the day we continue until we realize that place where there is no division between inside and outside, that most pure state of mind. One week, two weeks, one year, two years, that ultimate place of no separation between inside and outside. Our state of mind and Mu become fully one, everything we see and hear, all of our functioning, our tasting, our smelling are all one Mu. Within that we gather everything. Filling the heavens and earth without any sense of our body, there is only Mu existing at all. We become like one who has seen a dream and cannot describe it. We simply reflect it, as it is, but have no way of understanding it or of expressing it. This state of mind is called the great death. This state of mind has to be realized and entered and then it is an explosive conversion and the heavens will be astonished and the earth shaken. In this way Master Ummon Ekai has told about this great death where there is no more seam between self and other, impossible to be divided, it becomes the flowers, the stars the sound of the stream and the ringing of the bell.

As Rinzai Zenji says, "Our true nature is not something we can decorate with studies or money or zazen or the various practices or with the gathering of merit." It is not necessary to decorate it. It is exactly as it is. It doesn't increase or decrease because we have done training. It is exactly as it is, there is nothing that can decorate it. There is nothing that necessary to first know to be the Buddha Nature, like yoga or tai chi or doing chi kung. Everybody makes this mistake, thinking we must first learn this and learn that. That is only something with which we mistakenly think we want to decorate our selves. You cannot decorate the original nature; there isn't anything in all the heavens and earth with which to decorate our true nature. It is that true nature which decorates the whole of nature, the whole universe. It manifests all decorations, hearing the rain drop drip, drip, drip. Oh! How quiet and peaceful it is! It decorates in this way, the moon rising up over the mountain-how beautiful! The maple leaves are such a bright color and in our bellies the flowers are so fully blooming! It is all decorating! All the grasses and trees! It decorates with all of these! How

it is so beautiful! It is so lovely! It decorates everything! Nothing in the heavens and earth can decorate our Buddha nature but our Buddha nature decorates everything.

If we think this world is so terrible it is because we are moved around by the external events. While nothing can decorate our true nature, we try, and then become melancholy. With that nature we should instead decorate the whole world! That which is right here, right now, that which hears these words and is right here, that is the most excellent decoration in the whole world, the most splendid. Because we don't realize this completely we are pulled away, looking at this and that, thinking one of them is better and being tugged around. We are not missing anything at all, but we feel this Buddha nature like an eggshell or rice hull, as if there is something covering it over. If our Buddha Nature is manifested as it is, then we don't need to cover it over at all, but because we cannot take off that eggshell or rice hull we all get caught on our egos and stuck on various things.

So how can we take off that shell, how to break through that layer? It cannot be done with power because it is our own consciousness. We have to not look aside, but with our own awareness we see our own awareness. That is Mu and Nembutsu and it is not about how long we have done it but to see directly that which is doing that Mu and Nembutsu. From morning til night and night til morning we have to not let go of it. We must keep that awareness right in hand like a bird that is warming its egg without separating from it, so that chicks' life energy breaks right through that eggshell. The rice hull feels the light and warmth even underneath the earth and pops through it from the inside out, not from the outside in. The life energy vividly surges through. This is zazen and Nembutsu that which heats up that life energy is the Mu, the Namu Amida Butsu.

If we think that if we say Mu we can or cannot realize kensho that is dualistic. Is it someone else who has this Buddha nature? Say Mu or not say Mu? There is no such dualism only Mu again and again and again.

“For the person who is straightforward and courageous becoming a Buddha happens in one single mind moment” When we realize that completely we can for the first time understand what Master Ummon Daishi meant by “Every day is a good day”.

Life is first of all this truth of being true nature. Being awakened to this is the base. We have to understand that truth not mentally but experience it and with that experience we can see clearly what to do. If we do not realize that essence, then we look always outside of ourselves for everything we get confused. If human's true nature is understood totally then if the wind blows the grasses naturally wave and as the water flows and gathers, the pool grows. The outside world and our mind move as one. We often feel when we do zazen that we are not moving at all. We feel that everything is moving right toward us, the zendo, the hondo, and the jikido. If we think we move it is because our mind is moved around. If we become strongly rooted then we see that it is not we who moves but that everything moves toward us and this is the state of mind of, “Everyday is a good day”.

It all comes right to us so there is nothing to be afraid of, we have not sought after it so no matter what difficult work comes to us there nothing to be moved around by because we have not sought it, it has simply come to us. This is the truth of Buddhism and Zen, which must be realized and discovered.

During this coming year to not be moved around by external things but to realize our own essence as deeply as possible is our great vow.

## Sogenji Sesshin Schedule 2003

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|          |        |           |
|----------|--------|-----------|
| January  | 6-10   | Kosesshin |
|          | 15-21  | Osesshin  |
|          | 26-30  | Kosesshin |
| February | 4-10   | Kosesshin |
|          | 15-21  | Osesshin  |
|          | 25-3/1 | Kosesshin |

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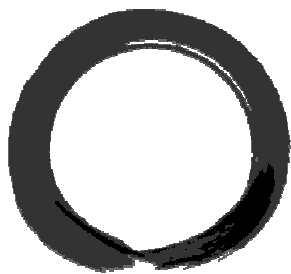
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|-------|-------|-----------|
| March | 5-9   | Kosesshin |
|       | 14-20 | Osesshin  |
|       | 25-29 | Kosesshin |
| April | 5-11  | Kosesshin |
|       | 16-22 | Osesshin  |
|       | 25-29 | Kosesshin |

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For Sesshin information contact [sogenji@po.harenet.ne.jp](mailto:sogenji@po.harenet.ne.jp)

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