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

Hakuin's Vow

Hakuin intensified his vow to awaken all beings to the selfless Mind, and gave the words “straight forward bravery”, and in accordance with that he opened his own life. No matter how long it takes, without being afraid, go straight and without fail the path will open. There is nothing greater than this. Hakuin Zenji, with this great compassion, is the one from whom this ‘Evening Talk on a Boat’ (Yasen Kanna) was given birth.

Hakuin Zenji, once so desperately disappointed and ready to quit was guided when he read Breaking through the Barrier. In this text, when he read the story of the monk Jimyo, he realized he must complete his Path. The words written there, “Great efforts, without fail, bring great light”, were not just words for him, but a path which he then walked with his own feet to its very completion. Here was Hakuin Zenji's truth made totally clear and expressed to the ultimate. Hakuin Zenji says, ‘I, from the first time I entered the path of sanzen, I made a vow that I would give all of my body and mind to the path of straightforward bravery. I give rise to the immovable vow of the great heavenly god Futaiten.’ He established his burning passionate Vow and with this he entered his Path.

In his writing Hakuin teaches the pure mind of this straightforward bravery. Each and every one has to realize their true nature; to encounter this true nature directly is the goal of our life. To achieve worldly fame people live a vicious, competitive life in society, in order to become famous we make others suffer and struggle in pain. The fame and knowledge of the society, the possessions and material belongings of this world, if we were born and live only for these things, then there is no relationship in our life to human truth or the Buddha Dharma.

Even if we are living in a big house it is not our own possession. We live in a society with devoted to fame, belongings and information, but these are not what decides the value of a human being. We are born into this world for one and only one goal - for each and everyone of us to directly touch the truth.

The Sixth Patriarch went to the Yellow Plum Mountain to

meet the Master Goso Gunin, the Fifth Patriarch.

He had been supporting his mother by picking up firewood in the mountains and selling it to customers. When he was a youth selling firewood he heard a line of the Diamond sutra and was awakened. He then travelled a very long distance, crossing the Yangtze river, and finally arriving at Yellow Plum Mountain to meet the Master Goso Gunin.

The monastery was full of people of high culture from northern China, as many as seven hundred of these people were doing training at the monastery. Then, this southern arrives and the Fifth Patriarch asked him, “What are you seeking here?”

Eno Zenji responded that he travelled from the south of China to meet Master Goso, that here was not here to seek any thing, he came to realize the Buddha. Eno travelled so far to clarify humans truth and believing in this truth in every single person. Eno had come here to realize that mind of the Buddha. To give his whole life to this and become the state of mind of the Buddha.

Probably the Fifth Patriarch, Goso Gunin Zenji, was checking out the state of mind of Eno, and with of all these cultural people from the north gathered there, he said to Eno, “You are a barbarian from the South! You have no such capability!” To this Eno said, “Maybe there are a north and a south in directions but in Buddha Nature there is no north nor south.” There may be such a difference as a very cultured person or one who has not such an education, but in Buddha Nature there is no North and South, there is nothing movable in humans true nature.”

We have within the truth which is no different whatsoever whether we are cultured or highly educated or ignorant.

Here we are talking about events of 1300 years ago, just as in our own time people took it as a given that there was a discrimination among people.

Master Mumon Ekai says in his commentary on the koan of Joshu's Mu koan: sanzen is for completely breaking through the barrier of the patriarchs. To say one understands Zen, to understand the Buddha Dharma, is to realize the same experience as the patriarchs and to awaken to the same state of mind to which they awakened and for

realizing this we have to their experience.

This koan of Joshu whether it is truly deeply experienced, whether they have realized this deep experience themselves, this is what it is - it is seeing.

All day long we are always looking at things from our own state of mind. We are always thinking good or bad and judging everything we see. The patriarchs are teaching that if we try to see the truth from our personal position it's impossible. The patriarchs have seen this from the true root source, from the place where they have thrown away the small "me" completely.

No matter what a brilliant genius is this person, if they are seeing it from their small personal self, it is always colored by one's ego and there is a huge gap. You have to step away from that and let go of any position of a small self, an individual ego. For this we have to do sanzen and pass the barriers of the patriarchs.

We have to clarify and purify our state of mind.

We have to receive and accept all humankind, we have to realize this huge all embracing state of mind. If we leave any bit of our small self or our mental ideas and dualistic views, we are not able to receive and embrace the varied states of mind of all people.

Only when we can totally throw ourselves away and go beyond our dualistic state of mind, when we are able to throw all of that away, to let go of all of that, then there is the state of mind of the patriarchs. And to enter this we have to breakthrough to our awakened mind, to our deepest mind, to the mind which is prior to where it all comes forth.

We have to let go of our personal dualism, our personal state of seeing things, and for this we have to realize the source of it. Which means we have to go to the source of all of that dualism in order to realize a state of mind of the patriarchs.

From when we were born, we have gathered many dualistic points of view, many mental ideas about things, we have brought into it our own small self's position. Up until today everything we've ever experienced and learned, we are repeating and repeating, and dualistic actions are our actuality.

We have to cut the root of all of that. Cut through to where it comes from and see it clearly, to return to the state of mind of a just born baby.

To return to this pure spirit this is called the Buddha Dharma.

It is not about advanced and brilliant judgments, dualistic thinking, or mental operations in our head.

This we have to see clearly or we are not able to let go of that which is lingering in our consciousness.

That which we have learned from when we were born, from when we were able to learn things at all

We have been gathering all of this information just like the morning dew on a leaf always wanting to rely on something. We rely on this conditioning, but this conditioned state of mind is only gathered knowledge. We have to go to the source, wash all of that away and experience this source. Because we have to do this we have to make a deep vow and deep commitment, and decide to go straight forward with the bravery of our faith in realizing this true mind. If not, this truth will not be born. This is where Zen is.