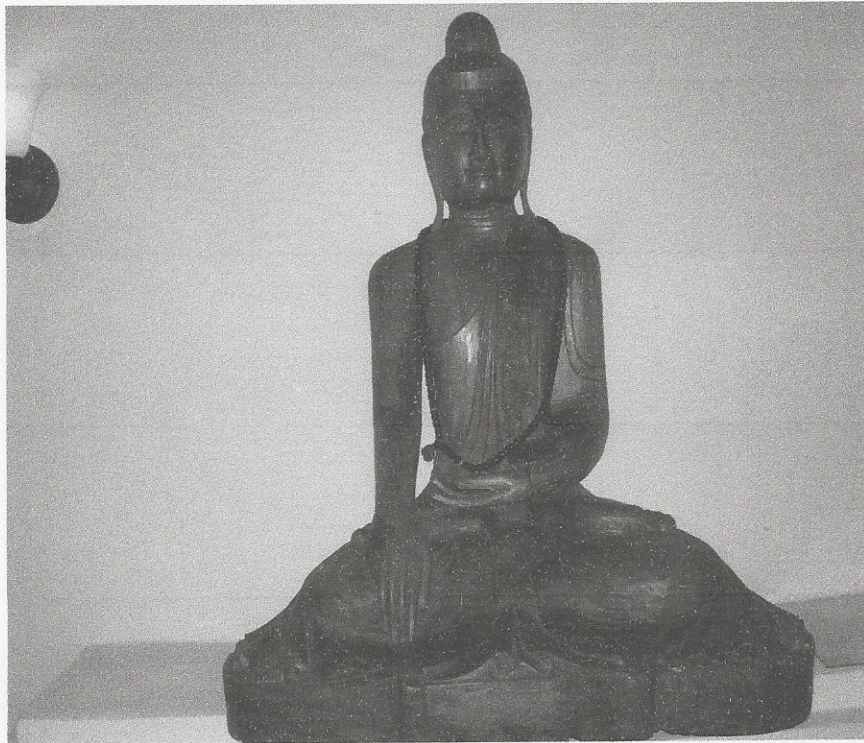


# - Touching The Earth -

Newsletter for The Detroit Street Zen Center – Vol. 1  
No.1



This is the first issue of the newsletter of the Detroit Street Zen Center, Total Dynamic Functioning Zen Temple. It is devoted to the true transmission of the teachings and to the authentic teacher disciple transmission that has occurred throughout Buddhist history. Total Dynamic Functioning Zen Temple or Zenkigenji has Dainin Katagiri-roshi and Harada sekkei-roshi as its founders. In this issue and the issues that follow, there will be talks by Harada sekkei-roshi who is the present Abbott of Hosshinji Monastery in Obama Japan and Katagiri-roshi who was the Abbott of the Minnesota Zen Center until his

death in 1990. The other topics of the newsletter will be focusing mainly on the teachings of Eihei Dogen, the founder of Soto Zen and as well as topics on Zen in everyday life.

In the Fukanzazengi, Dogen says, "Please, honored followers of Zen. Long accustomed to groping for the elephant, do not be suspicious of the true Dragon." This is a story from the Shinshi ryaku, which Dogen used as a metaphor for the situation in Japan at that time, when the true transmission of the Dharma had been only partial, yet had seemed authentic and real to the practitioners because they had never encountered the true Dharma. He encouraged them that now that the true Dharma had arrived, not to doubt it. We should have this same intent, to follow our deep questioning of the true Dharma, of realizing and verifying it and therefore transmitting it to future generations. We should not hesitate to deeply question its authenticity.

In gassho,  
Yuko Conniff  
Resident priest

The following discussion by Harada sekkei-roshi was from an interview in 1993 with a Japanese television announcer who specialized in religious topics and was featured on the program, "The Awakened Self".

Roshi: Hosshinji is an official training monastery. However, for the last 80 years or so the lay people have been permitted to attend sesshin. They are requested to follow the same rules as the monks and if they can, they are allowed to come and sit sesshin.

Announcer: Eighty years ago would be the Taisho Period.

Roshi: Yes. At most training monasteries, I think there is quite a bit of resistance to having lay people come and sit zazen.

Announcer: Is that right?

Roshi: Those with "bodaishin", the mind which seeks the way of liberation. Out of consideration for this, lay people are allowed to come and sit with us.

Announcer: In conveying Zen to people of other countries, there must be some differences which appear.

Roshi: Some changes must be made, I think. For example, one person asked me, "We've already learned enough from religions in the form of teaching, including Buddhism, but I want to know what is the essence of those teachings?"

Announcer: The essence...

Roshi: I explain that the essence is the Dharma. Buddhism or the Buddhadharma is the religious teaching based on the Dharma expounded by Shakyamuni. This teaching came into being because he clarified himself. So if you people here truly clarify yourselves, then the teaching becomes your own. This means that the Dharma doesn't only belong to Shakyamuni. Since it belongs to any person who grasps it, if that person expounds what they have grasped, then it becomes their teaching. This means it isn't only restricted to Shakyamuni's teaching.

Announcer: This means that the teaching and the Dharma are different.

Roshi: Yes. When Bodhidharma went from India to China, he met the emperor of China, Wutei. The emperor had a great intellectual understanding of Buddhism and asked many questions, but Bodhidharma rejected all of it. He realized that in such conditions there would only be the possibility of spreading the teaching, but no chance to spread the Dharma. So Bodhidharma went into the mountains and sat for nine years in a cave facing a wall. In that way he demonstrated the Dharma itself, without giving explanation. Finally, as he had thought, he was able to foster a great disciple, Taiso Eka.

Announcer: Is that why you gave the Dharma talk in America in which you said the people there shouldn't understand Zen or the Way of the Buddha conceptually or intellectually?

Roshi: That's right. The Chinese characters for the word religion mean "the teaching of the source." Therefore the people generally think that all religions, including Buddhism, are teachings of the source. I think there is the danger of getting them confused. There is the need to point out that the teaching of Buddha is slightly different from other religions.

Announcer: Especially in the case of Zen. Earlier you spoke of Bodhidharma...there is an emphasis on not being able to understand it intellectually...

Roshi: As long as we don't clarify ourselves, we hear the teaching through the self, the

ego, and then interpret the teaching in various different ways. This means there is a big gap. So no matter how well or clearly you've studied and learned the teaching, you still won't reach the Dharma. The teaching of Buddhism is "no self" because it is the teaching of someone who has truly gotten rid of the ego. As long as the ego exists, it means you can't truly hear the teaching.

Announcer: I see. It seems like a contradiction.

Roshi: This means that the people sitting sesshin here are hearing the teaching even though they don't really understand it. "Be selfless." But they are still practicing within the confines of the ego. Until a person truly forgets the self, it won't be possible to truly practice and become the teaching of Shakyamuni.

Announcer: That means inevitably the ego is included within understanding the teaching and apart from that understanding is the world of the Dharma.

Roshi: That's right.

Announcer: Is this the meaning of the Zen expression "no dependence on words and letters?"

Roshi: Yes. Zen was brought to China from India by Bodhidharma. But before he arrived in China, Buddhism, the teaching of the Buddha (i.e. the sutras), had already been there a long time. The teaching was like a prescription for medicine.

Announcer: A prescription?

Roshi: If your head hurts, then take this. If you have a stomach ache, then take this. At that time there was only this kind of discussion. Then Bodhidharma arrived. He embodied the Dharma itself. He pointed out that debating and arguing about this and that had nothing to do with the real teaching of Buddha. But they were only accustomed to the intellectual teaching of Emperor Wutei and other scholars. The teaching of the Bodhidharma seemed to be strange and unusual for them so that none of them could believe it. Bodhidharma knew that the Dharma would die even if the intellectual teaching of Buddhism was passed on. Coming to this conclusion, he went to the mountains.

Announcer: It's not in letters. It's not in the sutra books.

Roshi: That's right. There is something which must be transmitted separate from the teachings. That is the meaning of "no dependence on words and letters; a special transmission outside the sutras."

Announcer: Then by means of zazen it is possible to reach the world of the Dharma without relying on the sutras.

Roshi: Yes. It is important to know that it isn't possible to use zazen or Zen as a means or way to reach the final point which is the world of the Dharma. Zen itself is the Dharma itself. This is something you can realize for yourself. "Ah, so that's the way it is!" To simply sit and think about concepts which appear in the sutras like KU (emptiness) or MU (nothingness) and imagine what they are like isn't Zen. If that is what a person is going to do, they may as well go to school and study various commentaries on the sutras.

Announcer: I've read your book which is a compilation of your Dharma talks. In this book expressions such as "true person of the Dharma" or "a liberated person" or "true peace of mind" appear. Now hearing you say that the teaching and the Dharma are different, I wonder what is a "true person of the Dharma."

Roshi: "A true person of the Dharma" includes everyone, regardless if they've made the Dharma their own or not, or whether they've experienced satori or not. This is to say that we are only able to perceive the past and the future. What is the present which divides past and future? "Now" or the present is impossible to perceive. There is no so-called "now", no instant which you can say is "now". This is exactly what we explain with the Word "Dharma". This means that something which cannot actually be perceived is simply explained as the Dharma so at least we can perceive it intellectually. To grasp the Dharma, then, means for the self to assimilate something which doesn't exist. We can only perceive the past and the future and yet certainly there is the present even if it isn't possible to know it. It's not there and yet it is, the moment "now".

Announcer: We usually think we understand "now".

Roshi: But that is in the past. To understand something creates a distance. Because there is a distance, we can see something. If we can't see something it is because there is no distance between it. This means we are one with it. The condition of being one with things is explained as the Dharma.

Announcer: That means that we are within the Dharma.

Roshi: Yes.

Announcer: The Dharma itself.

Roshi: To sit and realize, "yes, that's the way it is", that is what we call satori. This means there is no one who is not liberated. It is simply a question of whether you realize it or not. This means that there is no one who cannot awaken by practicing according to the correct teaching. Satori is your own reality. Anyone can realize it.

Announcer: The Dharma itself...what interferes? What are the obstacles?

Roshi: In Buddhist terms, we say it is ignorance.

Announcer: ignorance, lack of clarity...

Roshi: Essentially all is one, Ignorance is to divide that into two. Subjective, objective. No one can think these two thoughts at the same time, subjective and objective. Or good and bad. Or like and dislike. No one can consciously think two things at the same time. But because we are changing so rapidly, we think we can think subjective and objective or good and bad at the same time. For that reason we compare. But in fact it isn't possible to compare. As long as one thought doesn't disappear, another new one can't appear. And yet it seems as if we can compare good and bad. This is the human condition.

Announcer: This sort of thinking, then, is delusion.

Roshi: That's right. It is the function of the ego. No one is born a buddha. We say everyone is a buddha, so this may sound contradictory. But without going through the process of ignorance and clarifying it, it isn't possible to understand that you are Buddha and an enlightened being.

Announcer: So we are endowed with Buddha nature at birth, but as human beings we are also born into a condition of ignorance.

Roshi: That's right. For example salt is these days manufactured from sodium nitrium, but formerly salt was refined from sea water on salt beds. Yet it isn't possible to use sea water to flavor food simply because it is salty. It must be refined into salt using appropriate procedures and then it can be used to season food. Without this process, it

doesn't become salt nor will we become Buddha.

Announcer: This means that we all essentially possess the nature of salt, but we are still like the ocean water.

Roshi: That's right. Of course, sea water can be used to some extent, but there are limitations. It must be made into salt. In Buddhism, we refer to this process as practice. And when it finally becomes salt, the practice has been accomplished. This, in other words, is liberation or satori.

Announcer: So putting the sea water on the salt beds, that process is zazen.

Roshi: That's right. Zazen isn't only a matter of sitting. It is the attitude or intention of trying to eliminate the gap between yourself and other things. If a person lives their life this way, even if they don't sit, they are doing Zen practice. There is no doubt about that.

Announcer: It's that wide of a thing?

Roshi: On the other hand, if a person does zazen and that person is separate from zazen, then they are split in two. So even if that person is sitting, they aren't doing zazen.

Announcer: "Zazen split in two", an interesting expression.

Roshi: This is when "I" practices zazen.

Announcer: Is this the ego of which you were speaking earlier?

Roshi: Yes. If "I" practice zazen, then they are separate. In that case a person is constantly watching the condition of their zazen. Because they are separate, they can easily see that condition. But in this way, even if a person is sitting zazen, they are not one with it. A person who is lying in bed making the proper effort to be one with their condition is doing zazen to a far greater degree.

Announcer: So it's not simply a matter of the posture of one's body.

Roshi: That's right.

Announcer: I'd like to turn around and ask if it is necessary to practice zazen in order to produce salt?

Roshi: Yes. To forget the ego, to become one with things is zazen. To be one, you must be one with things. So there is no other way, is there?

Announcer: To return to our earlier conversation, we were talking about conceptual or intellectual understanding, in other words, the realm of teaching. To leave this realm and enter the realm of being the Dharma itself, which is the objective of Zen, are there no conditions for doing that?

Roshi: If the ego/self isn't inserted between the teaching and that which hears or that which sees, then the things are heard and seen directly. If there are no interventions of the self, no self-consciousness, where the self is not raised..and, in fact, that is the way we always are. We aren't conscious of the self when we see or hear. Wherever we are and whatever we are doing we are in a condition of being one with things. But a split second apart from "now" and we perceive things. This is the biggest problem, the perception of things.

Part II next issue

## ABOUT THE CENTER

### Daily Schedule:

Mon.- Fri.. zazen: 5:45am, 6:25am

Service: 7am

Mon.- Fri. – zazen: 8:40pm

Wed. zazen: 7:30pm

Sutra study: 8pm

Tues., Thrs. - Introduction to zazen: 8:40pm

Sat: zazen: 5:45am and 6:25

Service 7:40am

Oryoki 8:20am

Zazen 9:40am

Talk 9:20am

Tea – 11am or after the talk

11:30am – 2pm work

Third weekend of the month – two day sesshin

This year we have studied the Heart Sutra and the Tenzo Kyokun and are now studying the Fukanzazengi and Bendowa.

### In gratitude for your contributions

Pat Clark for his invaluable creation of the Zen center and Great Patience Zen Stitchery websites.

Rod Rowland for his generous contributions in helping with the Zen Center finances  
Ian Stuart for his deeply appreciated donations of the Zendo and Kitchen Buddhas, the Tibetan Tanka,, the beautiful statue of Maitreya, the Zendo incense bowls, the Lion's seat chair, the large kesa (bell for the Zendo/Buddha Hall) and the antique desk for my study.

Rev. Kozen Sampson for his wonderful contribution of the large mokugyo for the Zendo/Buddha Hall, fukusus, priest bag and other gifts.

Barrett Martin for his beautiful sculptured creation of the Enso for the Zendo and the painting of the Earth, Fire , Wind Ensos for the entrance to the Zen Center

Jamie Savage for his very generous contribution of the HP laptop for the skype teaching of the Lake Mary group, future podcasts and helping in the tutoring of students for the underprivileged

Denis Cherkasov and Kate Cherkasova for their generous donations

Bertrand Davis for his contribution of the All in One Printer

Catherine Levitt and the Chinese seal carver master who donated a hand carved Dharma stamp for ordination papers and whom I've never met, but have deep gratitude.

My landlords for being patient with the rent.

## Patience

My first teacher, Dainin Katagiri had for his Dharma name Dainin or great patience. I think that when he was younger he did not have patience, but his teacher saw a great potential for this in him, and therefore gave him this name. Patience is truly a wonderful quality to have and cultivate. It seems to be something few people have these days with all our supposed ability to multitask.

Patience is an allowing process – it allows things to complete themselves, it allows beings to express themselves, it allows us to experience the moment fully. The other day I had to do some laundry, and in our apartment building there is only one washer and dryer for a lot of people, so getting washing machine time can be difficult at times. When I entered the laundry room, I noticed there was five minutes left on the dryer ( I only needed to dry some things), so I waited until someone appeared for their laundry. I had very little time in which to do this, so I was hoping for a quick removing of the clothes, then on with the drying. It was interesting to see my mind set of, “so on with the drying.” This person, whom I had not talked to in months, proceeded to slowly take his clothes out of the dryer and fold them, giving me cues that this was his time, but reassuring me it would be done shortly. At first, I was a little irritated, also an interesting view of my mindset, and an awakening one. I realized this was his time and also the chance to share that time with him, so we talked about our lives. I noticed the evening sky with a plane slowly climbing high heading toward the sea and the breeze that gently blows at that time of the day. We forget to savor life, to appreciate its unfolding because we have an agenda – our agenda. But the universe has its own agenda. Things rarely truly happen according to our agenda, even though it appears that way. Our agenda is something we throw out on top of reality, things as they are, and tenaciously hold on to that framework, ignoring what the universe is trying to tell us, ignoring the needs of others or the incredible spaciousness of allowing the moment to happen, to unfold as it is.

We usually think of patience as something we have to wait for or that has to be done at a slower pace, but almost always patience means something that we can deal with, even though it may be a little difficult. But real patience is when we feel we cannot deal with the situation, that we cannot possibly, at that moment, wait or allow the event to unfold or happen as it is happening. It has to be unbearable, impossible to wait for things to unfold that is the true experience of patience. Patience is not when we can bear the situation; it is when we cannot bear the situation and then we do it, we stay with it. We take a deep breath, and we just settle, and we take each moment, then the next moment and the next. Real patience demands a deep settling, a going beyond our conceptual framework of what we think we can bear. This is why we do sesshin. On the third or fourth day we cannot imagine of doing 3-4 more days; it is impossible. Everything hurts, every position is uncomfortable. We have to sit through long talks, long meals and 12 or more periods of zazen a day. But we do it moment by moment. We transcend our conceptual framework of what we think we can do or bear moment by moment. We come to exist in a string of moments which is reality itself. Everything exists this way in the universe – just now, this moment. Then, almost unbelievably sesshin becomes easier, and we actually enjoy the last few days. We have transcended our ideas of what we think we can do or bear. We have dropped off our computer gridwork of reality, our conceptual mind and experienced what true patience is, what true time is. The enlightened being realizes this is not just an

experience, but the way things are, have always been and have been no other way. This is called realization or awakening or Buddha.

Yuko Conniff

If you would like to receive the newsletter through email, please send your request to [info@detroitstzencenter.com](mailto:info@detroitstzencenter.com).