

Buddha, he still practices diligently. I see that in all worlds, from those the size of the whole universe down to those the size of a mustard seed, there is no place the bodhisattva does not abandon his own body and life in order to help living beings. All this is done for the sake of living beings, and afterwards he will achieve perfect enlightenment.”<sup>6</sup>

You should clearly understand that this universe is a fragment of the red heart, and space is contained within the hollow of the hand. They are the whole body of the Tathagata. This has nothing to do with the Buddha's renouncing his body or not renouncing his body. The relics of the Buddha are neither prior to his appearance in the world nor do they come after his disappearance, for it is not really a question of whether they are or are not the Buddha. The long eons of difficult and painful practices are the activity of the womb of the Buddha, they are the activity of the innermost being of the Buddha; that is to say, they are the Buddha's skin, flesh, bone, and marrow. When it is said that these practices have not ceased even for a second, it means that even though he is perfectly enlightened, he still practices vigorously, and he continues forever even though he converts the whole universe. This activity is the whole body of the Tathagata.

#### NOTES

1. The quote is from the *Lotus Sutra*, "Dharma Teacher" chapter. All references to "sutra" in this essay mean *Lotus Sutra*.
2. "Mark of ultimate reality which all things have" is a translation of *jissō*, sometimes translated as "true-mark" or "mark of reality" in other translations. It means that all things just as they are reveal the true state of reality, the body of the Buddha.
3. *Anuttara samyak sambodhi* means "supreme, perfect enlightenment." It is the enlightenment of Śākyamuni.
4. *Lotus Sutra*, chapter named "Life-Duration."
5. These are volume measures, a *koku* equalling almost five gallons, a *shō* equalling a little over one and a half quarts.
6. Also a quotation from the *Lotus Sutra*.

## GYŌJI

### "Continuous Practice"

In the great Way of the Buddha patriarchs there is always supreme continuous practice which is the Way without beginning or end. Arousing the thought of enlightenment, practice, bodhi, and nirvana have not the slightest break, but are continuous practice which goes on forever. Therefore, it is neither one's own effort nor someone else's effort; it is pure, continuous practice which transcends the opposition of self and others.

The merit of this continuous practice upholds oneself and others, because due to one's own effort, all worlds in the universe all the way up to the heavenly abodes immediately share in its benefits. Even though you may not be aware of it yourself and others are not aware of it, that is the way it is. Therefore, because of the continuous practice of all the Buddhas and patriarchs, our own continuous practice becomes a reality and the Way of the Buddhas is opened for us. Because of our own continuous practice, the continuous practice of all

the Buddhas and patriarchs is manifested, and the Way of all the Buddhas is opened. Because of our own continuous practice, there are the merits of the Way which is without beginning. Because of this continuous practice, each former Buddha and patriarch abides as a Buddha, transcends Buddhahood, is resolved as a Buddha, and is perfected as a Buddha endlessly.

Because of this continuous practice, there are sun, moon, and stars. Because of this continuous practice, there are earth, sky, and heart within and body without, the four elements and the five skandhas. Continuous practice is not something ordinary people are fond of, but nevertheless, it is the true refuge for everyone. Because of this continuous practice of the Buddhas of past, present, and future, the Buddhas of past, present, and future are manifested. The merits of this continuous practice are sometimes not hidden, and so beings arouse the thought of enlightenment and begin to practice. Sometimes these merits of continuous practice are not evident, and so beings do not see and hear them and do not come to understand them. But you should understand that even though these merits are not revealed, they are not concealed.

When the continuous practice which manifests itself is truly continuous practice, you may be unaware of what circumstances are behind it, and the reason why you do not notice them is that to understand such a thing is not that special. Conditional arising is continuous practice, but continuous practice is not conditionally generated, and this you should diligently seek to understand. It is this way because continuous practice is not dominated by any other thing. This kind of continuous practice which reveals continuous practice is nothing more than our continuous practice now. The immediate "now" of continuous practice is not something which existed in me from before. The time called "now" is not born from continuous practice. The time when continuous practice is manifested is what we call "now." Consequently, one day of continuous practice by us becomes the

seed of all the Buddhas; it is the continuous practice of all the Buddhas. On the basis of this continuous practice, all the Buddhas are manifested. Not to continuously practice what is to be continuously practiced is to hate the Buddha, not to venerate the Buddha, to hate continuous practice, not to be born with the Buddha and die with the Buddha, not to learn with the Buddha, and not to practice with the Buddha. Opening up enlightenment in this present time and letting go of enlightenment are the action of continuous practice. Becoming a Buddha and transcending Buddhahood are the action of continuous practice.

For this reason, you may sometimes try to conceal the deluded thought of trying to avoid continuous practice when you neglect it by saying that "even avoiding continuous practice is itself continuous practice," but this is a half-hearted continuous practice, and it cannot be considered to be seeking continuous practice. Truly, it is like a poor person throwing away his inheritance and wandering off to some other land. Even though when you are distressed the wind and rain do not rob you of life and body, still the paternal inheritance will be lost. Therefore, continuous practice should never be neglected for even a second.

Our compassionate father and great teacher, Śākyamuni Buddha, went into the mountains when he was nineteen and began continuous practice, and at the age of thirty, he engaged in continuous practice which perfected his practice along with that of the earth and all sentient beings. Up to the age of eighty, he practiced continuously in the mountains or in monasteries. He never returned to the palace of his father or resumed his position as a prince. For his whole life he never wore new monks' robes or had a new alms bowl. Not for a day, not for a moment, was he ever alone, but constantly taught others and received them in the Dharma. He did not ever reject the veneration of humans or divine beings, nor was he ever upset at abuse from the followers of other teachings. The teaching and conversion activities of his whole life-

time were nothing but continuous practice. Keeping his robes clean and begging for his food were nothing but continuous practice.

The eighth patriarch, Mahākāśyapa, was Śākyamuni's heir. In a previous life he had engaged in the practice of the twelve austerities as his continuous practice, and he was never negligent. The twelve austerities are as follows:

1. He did not accept invitations to eat at the homes of laymen, but every day he begged his food, and he did not eat the remains of the monks' one daily meal.
2. He lived in the mountains and never stayed in peoples' houses, counties, prefectures, or villages.
3. He did not beg for robes when he met people, nor did he take them if they were offered. He took the clothes off dead bodies, mended them, and wore them.
4. He stayed in fields and beneath trees.
5. He ate one meal a day.
6. He did not sleep on a broad bed. He continued to sit, and if he grew sleepy he walked around.
7. He owned only the three robes and did not use bedding.
8. He lived on the sides of hills, not in temples, and he did not live among people. He did zazen while gazing at the bones of the dead, always seeking the truth.
9. He wished only to be by himself and did not want to be with people. Also, he did not sleep among others.
10. When he had eaten some fruits and nuts, he would eat some rice, and then he

would eat no more.

11. He desired to live only in wild places, and he never stayed in huts under the trees.
12. He ate neither meat nor dairy products, nor did he ever rub hemp oil on his body.

These are the twelve austerities. He observed them faithfully for a whole lifetime, never backsliding. Even after he inherited the eye and treasury of the true Dharma from the Buddha, he never gave up the observance of these austerities. Once the Buddha remarked, "You are already quite old, please eat the regular monk's food as well as nuts and fruit." Mahākāśyapa replied, "If you had not appeared in the world, I would have been a pratyekabuddha<sup>1</sup> dwelling alone in mountains and forests. Now, because you have appeared in the world, I have acquired the nourishment of the truth. In order to observe continuous practice, I will not eat monk's food." The Buddha praised him for this.

Also, Mahākāśyapa once grew quite emaciated because of his austerities, and when some monks saw him, they made fun of him. The Buddha courteously sat Mahākāśyapa beside him on his own seat. So Mahākāśyapa sat on the same seat with the Buddha. He was the elder member of the Buddha's order, and all the circumstances of his whole lifetime of continuous practice can not be completely told.

For his whole life, the tenth patriarch, Pārśva, did not rest his ribs on the ground in order to lie down. Such practices, even though they continued until he was eighty, culminated in enlightenment and becoming a patriarchal teacher. Because he did not foolishly waste time, in three short years of intense effort he came to correctly transmit the Dharma treasury of the true teaching of enlightenment. This honored one was in his mother's womb for sixty years, and when he was born he already had white hair. He was called the "Rib Saint" because he vowed never to lie down, but rested only on an



armrest. In the dark his hands emitted flashes of light, which he used to help him read the scriptures and treatises. He exhibited these paranormal powers which he possessed naturally. Now when the Rib Saint was eighty, he renounced the world and made his home departure. However, some young people in the city criticized this, saying, "You are just a senile old man. How did you get to be so stupid? Those who make their home departure do two things: they practice zazen and chant the scriptures. Now that you are so old, you must not behave in this manner any more. You left home and joined the Buddha's order only in order to get something to eat." The Rib Saint heard their criticism, thanked them, and made this vow: "If I do not master the three parts of the canon, cut off all the desires of the three realms, and obtain the six paranormal powers, and make the eight liberations my own,<sup>2</sup> I will never use an armrest." From then on, he was careful about time, and even if he was walking about, he meditated, so that every day he was engaged in meditation whether he was sitting, doing things, going out, or returning. In the daytime, he did walking meditation, sitting meditation, and studied the scriptures, and at night, he did sitting meditation, so day and night for three years without a break he maintained his continuous practice. Consequently, he mastered the three parts of the canon,<sup>3</sup> cut off the desires of the three worlds,<sup>4</sup> and acquired the power of the three lores of the arhat.<sup>5</sup> When others heard of this, they praised him and called him the Rib Saint.

The Rib Saint was born after being in the womb for sixty years. I wonder if he didn't practice intensely while still in the womb? After he was born, when he reached eighty, he aroused the thought of enlightenment and made his home departure for the first time. From the time he was conceived, it was 140 years. Truly, he was a rare, outstanding man of talent. He was older than any of his Dharma contemporaries, for he had grown old in the womb, and he continued to grow old after he was born. However, he took people's criticism to

heart when he left the home life, and because he achieved the intention of his vow of home departure and acquiring the Way, after three years his practice was completed. No one who tries to do this sort of thing will speak unkindly of his example. Do not think ill of those who are very old.

It is difficult to investigate this life of ours or to thoroughly comprehend it. Is it life, or is it not life? Is it old age, or is it not old age? In accordance with different viewpoints, they are not at all identical, and the viewpoints themselves differ according to the individual's environment and abilities. If you want to understand such things, be determined and diligent in your practice. You should understand that life and death in their true form exist only within your practice, and that your diligent practice does not exist within life and death. Nowadays, when people reach the age of fifty, or sixty, or seventy, or eighty, they stop practicing, which is the limit of stupidity. No matter how many years you have lived up to now, they are nothing but thoughts in your mind, and you do not understand them in terms of practice. Do not look back on these years, or pay any attention to them, but just make a diligent effort in your practice. Be like the Rib Saint. Do not have any regrets about this present fleeting life, which is no more than a handful of earth from a cemetery, and do not look backwards at it. If you do not carry out your resolution, who is going to pity whom? You should try to see just how quickly this ownerless corpse is aimlessly scattered on the wild fields.

The sixth patriarch, Hui-neng, was a woodcutter in Hsin-chou. He was quite unlearned. He lost his father when he was young, and he was reared and cared for by his aged mother. He made a living from the woodcutting his father had done in order to care for his mother. One day, at a crossroads, he heard a passage being recited from the *Diamond Sutra*, and he left his mother at once and began to seek the Dharma. He was a man who is rarely seen, a preminent follower of the Way. Perhaps it was easy for Hui-k'o to cut off his arm in search of

the Dharma, but this cutting off of the bonds of love must have been extremely difficult, for I think that abandoning love for one's parents in this way is not easy. For eight months after he joined Hung-jen's group on Mt. Huang-mei, he neither slept nor rested, but pounded rice all night. As a result, he was correctly transmitted Hung-jen's Dharma in the night. Even after receiving the Dharma, he walked with the same mortar on his back and pounded rice for eight years. Even though he became the chief priest of a monastery and a preacher of the Dharma for people, he did not get rid of the mortar. This is indeed rare continuous practice in this world.

Ma-tsu of Chiang-hsi did zazen for twenty years. Thus, he received *inka* from Nan-yüeh. Even when he succeeded Nan-yüeh and taught the Dharma to others, he was still never negligent about doing zazen. He set an example for those who were learning Zen for the first time, and when it was time for work, he started to work first. Even when he grew old, he did not neglect this. Those of the famous present-day Rinzai tradition are descended from Ma-tsu.

Yün-yen and Tao-wu practiced together on Mt. Yo, made a vow together and for forty years, until they died, hardly ever reclined in a prone position and slept, but continued to practice the Way singlemindedly. In this way, they transmitted the great Dharma to the great master Tung-shan Wu-pen. Tung-shan said, "I wanted to practice the Way and do zazen a little, and already I have twenty years worth." This has been passed down to the present time.

When the great master Hung-chüeh of Yün-chü Mountain was staying in the Three Peaks Hermitage, a celestial being would send him food out of respect. The master visited Tung-shan, was enlightened in the great Dharma, and again returned to his hermitage. Again, the celestial being brought food, and though he called on the master, for three days he could not see him. The master no longer needed the help of this celestial being and tried only to attain the Buddha Dharma. You should think about the constancy of his deter-

mination to practice.

After Zen master Pai-chang had been Ma-tsu's attendant, there was not a day up to the day he died when he did not exert himself of behalf of those studying under him. As for the precedent he left us in his saying, "A day without work, a day without eating," Pai-chang was already an old man when he said this and had undergone many years of strenuous practice. Still, he worked hard in the fields with the younger men in training. The monks lamented over this and felt sorry for him, and they tried to make him stop working, but he would not stop. One day when Pai-chang was working, a monk hid the tools he was using and would not show them to the old master. So for that whole day, the master did not eat, because he was disappointed in not being able to join the monks in the fields. This is the story behind his "A day without work, a day without eating." In present day Sung China, in the tradition of Lin-Chin and in all monasteries everywhere, many constantly put into practice this deep teaching of Pai-chang.

While Ching-ch'ing was serving as chief priest at a certain monastery, a guardian spirit of the earth was never able to see his form. The reason was that he couldn't detect the whereabouts of the chief priest while he was working.

Zen master I-chung of Mt. Shan-p'ing had also previously received food from a celestial being. However, after the master saw Ta-tien (Pao-t'ung), the celestial being could not see him when he looked for him. The chief priest, the later Ta-wei, remarked, "I have eaten the food of Mt. Wei for twenty years, but because every bit of it went back into the latrines of Mt. Wei, I did not take a thing. I did not even follow the teachings of Mt. Wei. I am not such a simpleton as to take the guidance of others. I just worked as a cowherd for twenty years, taking care of a water buffalo bull." You should understand that he was able to take care of this water buffalo through his twenty years of continuous practice on Mt. Wei. This master had formerly studied under Pai-chang. Just

quietly picture to yourselves the circumstances of these twenty years of practice and do not forget them. Even though there are some who cultivate the Way of Mt. Wei, not receiving the teachings of Mt. Wei at all and continuously practicing the Buddha Way through work is truly rare.

The great master Chen-chi Ts'ung-shen, of Kuan-yin temple in Chao-chou, was sixty-one years old when he first aroused the thought of enlightenment and resolved to seek the Way. He went on a pilgrimage carrying a priest's staff and a bowl for cleaning himself, and walking everywhere, said to himself, "If I meet someone who is superior to me, even if she is a seven-year-old girl, I will ask her for the Way, and even if he is a hundred-year-old man, if he is my inferior, I will teach him. He studied Nan-chüan's Dharma and practiced for twenty years. When he was eighty, he became chief priest of the Kuan-yin Temple, where he was the guide for the world for forty years. During that time, he didn't send a single letter to any of the families who supported the monastery in order to get donations. The meditation hall was not large, nor were there even any stands in front and behind the hall where the monks could wash their faces and so on. One time, a leg of his seat broke off. So Chao-chou bound a piece of partially burned wood to the seat and kept it like this for a long time. The monk in charge of these matters wanted to replace the leg of the seat, but Chao-chou refused. You should make the traditions of these excellent Buddhas and patriarchs models for your own lives.

It was after he was eighty that Chao-chou became chief priest at Kuan-yin Monastery in Chao-chou, and after his master instructed him in the Way, he correctly transmitted the Buddha Way. Everyone called him the "Old Buddha." Those who did not correctly transmit the Buddha Way must have been weaker than this master as far as the Dharma is concerned. Those who were not yet eighty years old must have been stronger and healthier than the master. Now, when we compare ourselves, who are strong and healthy, to

this old teacher, we certainly do not come up to his standards with respect to the Buddha Way. Therefore, we must be diligent in our practices and practice continuously.

For forty years Chao-chou did not store up worldly goods, and every day he lacked sufficient rice. So, he either gathered chestnuts and ate them, or else he ate food given to him by the monks. Truly, all these are excellent examples of the lives of our predecessors, and excellent examples of practice by the Buddha's disciples. Once, Chao-chou said to the monks, "If you do not leave the monastery for your whole life and do not say a word for five or ten years, no one will be able to call you wicked. On the contrary, even all the Buddhas will not be able to call you anything."

These are golden words which illustrate continuous practice. You should understand that even though you may seem to be stupid because you are silent for five or ten years, you may be silent, but people will not call you wicked, and this is because of the merits of not leaving the monastery. This not leaving the monastery for your whole life is itself the very form of continuous practice. The Buddha Way is like this. But when you do not hear the sound of the Buddha's teaching, this is not to be considered the same as the non-evil of silence. But the supreme wonder of continuous practice is nothing other than not leaving the monastery, and not leaving the monastery is the total expression of dropping off mind and body. Stupid people do not understand this non-evil, nor do they make it known to others, because they cannot hear the Dharma preached within silence. The reason they do not teach this non-evil of silence is because they are deluded themselves. Those who do not understand that this is non-evil and do not teach it are to be pitied. The continuous practice of not leaving the monastery should be continuously practiced quietly. Do not just go about willy-nilly as if blown about by the east wind or west wind. If you possess the merit of continuous practice of not leaving the monastery for five or ten years to the extent that you do not even notice the spring



breezes or autumn moon, you will be emancipated from the spring breezes and autumn moon. The realm of this continuous practice is unknown by us, and we do not understand it. This present moment of continuous practice should be engraved on your hearts as something to be greatly prized. Do not think that this silence is useless and empty. Entering the monastery and doing zazen in silence, or leaving the monastery and going all about are both the form of the continuous practice of the monastery. This continuous practice of not leaving the monastery is the realm of freedom from conditions, in the same way that the sky is free from the tracks of flying birds; it is the realm where one is completely one with the whole universe. The whole universe is the monastery.

Ta-mei Mountain is in the prefecture of Ch'in-yüan. The person who founded the Hu-sheng Monastery was the Zen master Fa-ch'ang. He was from Hsiang-yang. Once he paid a visit to Ma-tsu and asked him, "What is the Buddha?" Ma-tsu replied, "The mind just as it is is the Buddha." Thereupon, Fa-ch'ang was enlightened. Then he went to the top of Ta-mei Mountain, where he stayed in a grass hermitage far away from people. He ate the seeds of cedar trees and wore the leaves of lotuses which grew abundantly in a pond on the mountain. There he did zazen and struggled for more than thirty years. Though he was lacking in worldly things, he never concerned himself and he completely forgot time. He was aware of nothing but the alternating greening and yellowing of the mountains all around him. When you think about it, this life of great poverty was pitiful.

When the master did zazen, he placed an eight-inch high iron pagoda on top of his head, as if he were wearing a crown. He did this so that he would have to stay awake in order to prevent the pagoda from falling to the ground. This pagoda is still at the monastery of Hu-sheng, and it is taken out from time to time and serves as a memento. Up to the time of his death, the master never forgot this practice.

When many years had passed, a monk who was studying

with Zen master Yen-kuan (Ch'i-an) came to the mountain and poked about with his travelling staff, and becoming confused about where the path was, without being aware of it stumbled upon the master's hermitage. Consequently, without intending it, he met the master. He asked Fa-ch'ang, "Chief priest, how much time has passed since you began living here in these mountains?" The master replied, "All I know is the green and yellow of these mountains." Again the monk asked, "Which direction is the path out of these mountains?" The master answered, "Just follow the stream." The monk thought that this was a wonderful answer, and when he returned to Yen-kuan and told him about it, Yen-kuan said, "Long ago, when I was in Chiang-hsi, I happened to meet a monk like that, but afterward, I heard no more about him. I wonder if this is the same monk?" Thereupon he sent a monk to ask the master to come down from the mountain, but Fa-ch'ang refused to come. So, Yen-kuan composed a poem and sent it to him. The poem read,

The stump of the dead tree stands in the  
cold forest;  
Even if it is exposed to the spring warmth,  
its heart is not moved.  
Since no one takes notice of it, it being so  
stiff and hard,  
Perhaps the carpenter will not want to use  
it.

Once more, Fa-ch'ang did not accept the invitation. Then he decided to move deeper into the mountains, and he composed a poem, which said.

One cannot cut all the lotuses in the pond;  
One cannot eat all the pine seeds.  
Since the world has discovered my  
dwelling so easily,  
I shall move my hermitage deeper into the  
mountains.

Later, Ma-tsu had a need to know the extent of Fa-ch'ang's attainment, so he sent a monk to find out. The monk asked Fa-ch'ang, "O Chief Priest, since you studied under Ma-tsu earlier, what principle did you acquire, and why did you come to live in these mountains?" The master replied, "My teacher, Ma-tsu, told me that the mind just as it is is the Buddha, and that is the reason I live here in these mountains." The monk said, "But recently the Buddha Dharma has changed." "How is it different?" asked Fa-ch'ang. Said the monk, "Nowadays, Ma-tsu says that it is neither mind nor the Buddha." To this, the master exclaimed, "That old fellow is still pulling the wool over everybody's eyes, eh? He can do whatever he wishes with this business of 'neither mind nor Buddha,' but all I care about right now is 'The mind is the Buddha.'" The monk returned to Ma-tsu and told him about all this, and Ma-tsu said, "The fruit of the plum is ripe."<sup>6</sup>

The whole world knows about these events. T'ien-lung was the excellent disciple of Zen Master Fa-ch'ang. Chü-tzu was another Zen man who dipped deeply into Fa-ch'ang's stream. Kya-chi, the Korean monk, transmitted the master's teaching and became the first patriarch of Zen in Korea. Consequently, everyone in the Zen tradition in Korea these days is drinking from the long stream of this master.

Even prior to his birth, a tiger and an elephant became the master's attendants, and they never quarrelled together. When the master died, the tiger and elephant carried rocks and mud and made a tomb for the master. This grave still exists at Hu-sheng Monastery. This master's continuous practice is praised unanimously by people who call him a preeminent master of past and present. Those who are slight in intelligence do not understand that this is to be praised. To think that it is all right to covet fame and fortune in the Dharma is the stupid idea of shallow people.

The Zen master Fa-yen, of the Monastery of the Five Patriarchs, said, "When my own master Pai-yün Shou-tuan, first went to live on Yang-ch'i Mountain, the rafters of the old

building were badly damaged, and the rain came through, and the wind was severe. One winter night, the rooms of the monastery were completely ruined. The monks' quarters were damaged and rain and hail covered the floor, making an intolerable situation. A white-haired old monk had to wipe the snow off the top of his head. The old monk, whose eyebrows had grown long, seemed to gather together all the furrows of his large, sad forehead in the face of this difficulty. When the other monks saw him, they too felt justified in feeling sad, and they were not able to do zazen. A monk wanted to rebuild the monastery, but Pai-yün rejected the plan. "Our great teacher, Śākyamuni, said that all things are impermanent. Even the high peaks and deep valleys change. All things are just like thoughts, so how can they satisfy? And it is just so. Ancient worthies practiced on the ground under trees. This is an excellent custom of ancient times. They are the exploits of ancient wise men. When we look back on the practices of the five patriarchs, our own practices do not equal theirs. The time when one is able to practice is a mere forty or fifty years. Who has time to build a splendid new building?" Consequently, he paid no attention to the monk's request.

The next day, Fa-yen went to the Dharma hall and spoke to the monks. "When he first went to Mt. Yang-ch'i, the rafters and walls were shabby and the beds were wrapped in jewel-like snow, the cold wind shrivelled his head, and he sighed in the night, but he recalled that the Buddha had carried out his own practice beneath trees and on rocks." Consequently, Pai-yün Shou-tuan did not approve rebuilding the monks' hall. However, in spite of this, all those under the heavens who wished to practice wanted to be included among his disciples. It is delightful that so many people aspired so deeply to practice the Way. You should therefore inscribe these words on your livers.

Zen Master Fa-yen once said, "Practice does not transcend thought; thought does not transcend words." You should give these words serious consideration. "Day and



night think of it; morning and evening do it" does not mean that you should be restless, as if you were being blown about by the winds of the north, east, south, and west.

The palaces of Japan's emperor and courtiers are simple dwellings thatched with miscanthus; they are not at all splendid palaces. How much less should those who have made their home departure and study the Buddha Way peacefully live in fine houses! Those who have acquired fine dwellings are leading lives of error; those who are pure are rare indeed. It is a different matter if they were owned originally, but you should not try to obtain such a dwelling. The ancient worthies lived in grass-thatched or miscanthus-thatched houses, and that is all they wanted. These are excellent facts. The Ch'in Emperor Hsiang Shih-tzu says in his *Shih-tzu*, "When you look at the conduct of the Yellow Emperor, look at his combined palace. When you want to look at the conduct of Yao and Shun, look at their palaces. The palace from which the Yellow Emperor ruled the country was thatched with grass and was called the combined palace. The palace from which Yao and Shun ruled the country was thatched with grass, and this was called a palace." O disciples, you must understand that these palaces were both thatched with grass. When we compare ourselves now with the Yellow Emperor or Yao and Shun, we are as far apart as heaven and earth. They made grass-thatched dwellings their palaces; how can those who have left the home life live in fine houses and halls? Indeed, it is a disgrace. The ancients lived beneath trees and in forests, and this included both home dwellers and monks, for both desired to live this way. The Yellow Emperor was the disciple of the Taoist master Kuang-ch'eng, who lived among the crags of the mountains called "K'ung-t'ung." These days, many of the emperors and their retainers in Sung China transmit this excellent spirit. Consequently, if ordinary people live in this manner, how can those who have made their home departure be any less? How can they be more impure than ordinary people?

Many of those who have been discussed up to this point received help from divine beings, but after the patriarchs acquired the great enlightenment, divine beings and spirits lost the power which allowed them to associate with the masters. You should understand this clearly. When these divine beings and spirits conform to the activities of the patriarchs, they can associate with them. However, once the masters have become enlightened and go beyond divine beings and spirits, there is no longer any means by which these spirits can see them clearly and they cannot approach them.

Concerning this, Nan-ch'üan said, "This old monk has no power of practice, and so he is easily seen by spirits." You should understand that being seen by these spirits is a result of having no power to practice. It is told that a temple guardian spirit who took the form of a servant in the T'ien-lung Monastery said once, "I have heard that Chief Priest Cheng-chio has lived on this mountain for more than ten years, but whenever I go to where he lives and try to see him, I cannot see him even if he is right in front of me." Truly, non-Buddhists and spirits not being able to see a person enlightened in that chief priest's Way is a fine example of the heritage of the patriarchs.

This T'ien-lung Monastery was originally a small monastery. While Cheng-chio lived there as chief priest, the Taoist sanctuary and Taoist nuns' monastery were removed and it became the present day Ching-te Monastery. When the master died, and the censor Wang Po-hsiang recorded the master's work, some people said, "The Zen master got rid of the monasteries which taught the teachings of the Taoists, so you should record the place as 'T'ien-lung Monastery'" (i.e., "Heavenly Dragon Monastery"). To this, the censor replied, "This is not right. It has nothing to do with the merits of the Buddhist priests." Many people praised the censor for this.

You should understand that this sort of thing should be considered a victory for ordinary people, not merits for the Buddhist priesthood. In general, after priests have entered

the Buddha Way, they clearly transcend the divine beings and humans of the three worlds. You should deeply comprehend the fact that monks are not utilized by the world or seen by the world. You should thoroughly understand that the activities of body, speech, and mind, and such things as Buddhas and ordinary beings, delusion and enlightenment, and so forth, all come from your own minds.

The merits of the continuous practice of the Buddhas and patriarchs are, of course, a great effort made for the sake of gods and humans, but you still do not understand that gods and humans are helped by the continuous practice of the Buddhas and patriarchs.

When you now attempt to practice continuously the great Way of the Buddhas and patriarchs, it is not at all a question of large or small, or bright or stupid. Just always reject fame and fortune and do not be bound by inner and outer conditions. Don't idle away the time needed for practice, but rather practice in the spirit of a person trying to extinguish a blaze in his hair. Do not sit and wait for enlightenment, for great enlightenment is to be found in everyday activities such as eating, or drinking tea. Also, do not wish to transcend enlightenment, for the transcending of enlightenment is truly the jewel in the topknot. The person who lives in his old home should leave it; the person who has thoughts and desires should get rid of them. The famous person should abandon fame, and the person who has benefitted materially should get rid of his goods. The person with fields and gardens should part with them, and the person with a family should leave it. You should renounce them even if you do not possess them. What should be clear in this matter is the principle of being free from them whether you have them or not. That is the continuous practice of being free from everything, whatever it is. Simply making an earnest effort to practice continuously and to get rid of fame and fortune is the continuous practice of making the life of the Buddha eternal. This present continuous practice is nothing

other than just that, just committing oneself to continuous practice for no other reason than to practice continuously. Therefore, you should love and respect this mind and body which support continuous practice.

The Zen master Ta-tz'u Huan-chung said, "It is better to go one foot than to talk ten feet; it is better to go one inch than to talk one foot." In a way, this is admonishing people of the present who are negligent about continuous practice and forget those things which are part of the Buddha Way, but it is not saying that it is wrong to talk ten feet. It just says that one foot of real effort is by far more important than talking ten feet. How could it be merely a question of the difference between one foot and ten feet? It is by far easier to talk about the difference between Mt. Sumeru and a grain of sesame. However, Mt. Sumeru is the whole of Mt. Sumeru, and the sesame seed is the whole of the sesame seed. The greatness of continuous practice is like that. These words are not just Huan-chung's words; they are words which transcend words.

The Zen master Tung-shan Wu-pen (Liang-chieh) said, "Speak what cannot be performed; do what cannot be spoken." This was this great priest's Way. Its true meaning is that action thoroughly pervades speech, and speech thoroughly pervades action. A whole day of speaking is a whole day of action. This is "practicing what cannot be practiced and speaking what cannot be spoken."

The great master Hung-chüeh of Mt. Yün-chü explained with regard to Tung-shan's statement, "When one speaks, there is no action, and when one acts, there is no speech." This does not mean that there is no speech or no action. "Speaking" means not leaving the Zen monastery for your whole life. "Action" means speaking by means of silence, as seen in the story of a certain monk who washed his head and went before Hsüeh-feng.<sup>7</sup> Do not be negligent about this.

Something excellent has been transmitted from ancient times by the Buddhas: "Even if a person lives for a hundred years, if he does not come to know himself as a Buddha, he is

not the equal of someone who lives for only one day and is able to thoroughly comprehend it." This was not said by just one Buddha or two Buddhas; it has been taught by all the Buddhas and has been put into practice by all the Buddhas. Within the eternal round of life and death, the single day of continuous practice is the bright jewel in the topknot. It is the true self which I share. (Lit., "It is the ancient mirror which has the same life and death as me.") It is a day to be joyously appreciated. Continuous practice is delight by virtue of the power of continuous practice. If the power of continuous practice is still insufficient, and you do not inherit the bone and marrow of all the Buddhas, you will not hold the bodies and minds of all the Buddhas in high esteem, and you will not rejoice at seeing all the faces of the Buddhas. The enlightenment of all the Buddhas does not go away, it goes according to the suchness of things, and it comes according to the suchness of things. Although it does not come, we shall still inherit it by means of this one day of continuous effort.

Therefore, one day should be valued and respected. A hundred years lived idly is a hundred years to be regretted. It is a shambles to be deplored. However, though you are wastefully enslaved to a hundred years of just running about here and there, if you involve yourself in continuous practice for just one day, you not only practice for a hundred years of this one lifetime, but you also help the hundred years of the next lifetime. This life of one day is a life to rejoice in. Because of this, even though you live for just one day, if you can be awakened to the truth, that one day is vastly superior to an eternal life. Therefore, people who are not yet enlightened should not waste this one day. This one day is a priceless jewel which we should value highly. You cannot compare it even with a huge jewel. Do not replace it even with a dragon jewel. The ancient wise men valued this one day even more than their own lives. Surely that is something to think about. The dragon's jewel can be sought. The huge jewel may be right in your hand. However, if this one day in the lifetime of

a hundred years is lost, will you ever get your hands on it again? Whatever skillful devices you may employ, there is no historical example of someone recovering a day which has passed. Wastefully spending a day is wastefully spending time which is ours. For this reason, ancient wise people valued time more than their own bodies or more than their native soil. Spending time wastefully is being seduced by the fame and fortune of this transitory world. Not spending time wastefully is being within the Way, it is activity done for the sake of the Way. As for those who are already enlightened, they will not spend even one day wastefully. They earnestly act for the sake of the Way, they speak for the sake of the Way. For that reason, we can understand why none of the Buddhas of the past squandered even a single day of practice. You must always keep this in mind. Think of this when you sit beside a bright window, leisurely spending a spring day. Do not forget it while you sit in a thatched house on a quiet, solitary, rainy night. Is it the light and dark which rob us of practice? They do not steal just a day. They pilfer away the merit of many ages to come. What enmity exists between us and the light and shade? Truly it is a bitter thing, but our neglect of practice is something we should blame ourselves for, though we do not reproach ourselves. The Buddhas and patriarchs were not without thoughts and desires, but they got rid of them. The Buddhas and patriarchs were not above ordinary conditions either, but they freed themselves from them. Though we may somewhat regret those conditions which are found within and without us, we do not utterly regret them. Consequently, if we do not abandon thoughts and desires, they will abandon us. If you very much regret your thoughts and desires, get rid of them. Truly, regretting thoughts and desires very much means getting rid of them.

Chief Priest Huai-jang, who was the Zen master Ta-hui of Nan-yüeh, practiced at Mt. Ts'ao-ch'i, where for fifteen years he served the sixth patriarch. He inherited the Way in the manner in which water is transferred from one bucket to



another. The practice of predecessors such as these should be highly respected. There must have been many things among those fifteen autumns of varied activity which may trouble us. However, the fact that he did zazen and earnestly learned the Way is now a mirror for those who continue after him. There were no coals in the stove in the winter, and on autumn nights when he had no lamp, he faced the bright window and did zazen, and though this has not been widely known, it was unconditioned, absolute learning. We should consider it to be the essence of continuous practice.

Generally speaking, if we cease being attached in our hearts to fame and fortune, daily things such as eating or drinking tea become the accumulation of continuous practice. Do not forget this. Zen Master Huai-jang's statement, "Though you may talk about the realm of great enlightenment, words cannot reveal reality, for language is just concepts. The realm of great enlightenment is real, it is experience. That realm was acquired for the first time [by Śākyamuni] after eight years of continuous practice," is a rare thing either in the past or in the present. But it is the continuous practice which both the wise and the ignorant should aspire to.

When the Zen master Chih-hsien was practicing with Ta-wei, he tried to say something that would indicate his enlightenment, but he could not say a single word. This grieved him, and he burned up all his books and spent several years as a waiter-monk in the monks' hall. Later, he climbed Mt. Wu-tang and sought the whereabouts of Nan-yang Hui-chung. There, he built a hermitage of grass, cut his connections with the world, and lived a peaceful life. One day, when he was sweeping the path, a stone flew and struck a bamboo, and when he heard the sound, he was immediately enlightened. Later, he became head monk at Hsiang-yen Monastery, and all he ever owned was one bowl and one set of robes, and he did not ever exchange them for new ones while he was head monk. With no one for companions except the strange rocks

and a stream of clear water, he lived an inconspicuous life in tranquility. It is said that once he entered the mountains, he never again came down. The traces of this continuous practice are transmitted to this day at Wu-tang Monastery.

The great master Hui-chao (Lin-chi I-hsüan) of Lin-chi Monastery was the legitimate heir of Huang-po, and he spent three years as Huang-po's disciple. He followed the Way single-mindedly and followed the teaching of Ch'en-tao Monastery in Mu-chou. Three times he asked Huang-po about the great meaning of the Buddha Dharma and its fundamental ideas, and altogether he was thrashed sixty times with the *keisaku*. He burned with a fiery spirit for seeking the Way. Then he visited Kao-an Ta-yü and had a great satori, but it was really due to the two Zen masters, Huang-po and Ta-yü. It has been said that the best of the patriarchs were Lin-chi and Te-shan, but how can Te-shan be put in the same category with Lin-chi? Truly, the Zen man Lin-chi was without an equal in the whole crowd. But the Zen world of that time was more preeminent than that of today. It is said that they practiced earnestly and that they were preeminent in continuous practice, but though we may attempt to resolve the question of the extent of their continuous practice, we ought not bother to do it.

When Lin-chi was at Mt. Huang-po, while he was planting some cedars and pines one day with Huang-po, Huang-po asked him, "Why on earth are we planting so many trees right here in this deep valley?" Lin-chi answered, "First, to improve the scenery around the monastery. Second, to serve as a guide for those who come after us." Now, Lin-chi's idea was that ordinary events are not imitations. He wanted to actively show the original face in continuous practice and to be a guide marker for the continuous practice of others, and crossing swords with Huang-po was a sign he raised. Lin-chi held up a hoe before Huang-po's face and twice struck the ground forcefully with it. At this, Huang-po just raised his staff. "I have raised my staff thus, but haven't you already

tasted the thirty blows?" Lin-chi made a sighing sound but remained silent. "My teaching will become widely known in the world in your time," concluded Huang-po.

Therefore, you should understand that when he planted trees even after acquiring the Way, Lin-chi personally held the hoe in his in his own hands. Huang-po was not mistaken when he said that his teaching would flourish in the world in Lin-chi's time because of this. These old precedents of men who practiced the Way by planting pines are still being transmitted today. Huang-po and Lin-chi both planted trees. During Huang-po's time, he left all the monks who followed him and became involved in the general work at Ta-an Monastery, where his continuous practice consisted of sweeping out all the rooms. He swept the Buddha hall and Dharma hall. But it was not continuous practice done for the sake of sweeping out the mind, nor was it continuous practice performed in order to cleanse the light of the Buddha. It was continuous practice done for the sake of continuous practice. It was about this time that he met the government official P'ei-hsui, who became Huang-po's disciple.

Emperor Hsüan-tsung was the second son of Emperor Hsien-tung. He was intelligent and wise from the time he was small. He loved to sit in the cross-legged position. While he was at the palace, he always did zazen. Mu-tsung was his elder brother. When Mu-tsung ascended the throne, Hsüan-tsung would playfully sit on the throne and pretend to greet the officials after the early-morning affairs of state had been concluded. When the court officials saw him do this, they thought he was crazy, and they told Mu-tsung about it. He went to see for himself and praised Hsüan-tsung: "My brother is the superior heir in this family." At the time, Hsüan-tsung was only thirteen years old.

In 814, Mu-tsung died. Mu-tsung had three sons: Ching-tsung, Wen-tsung, and Wu-tsung. Ching-tsung died after occupying his father's throne for only three years. Wen-tsung is said to have been on the throne for only one year and was

forced to abdicate by close associates. So Wu-tsung became Emperor and Hsüan-tsung did not, and Hsüan-tsung stayed in his nephew's country. Wu-tsung always called him his "crazy uncle." Wu-tsung was emperor from 841 to 846. He was the one who persecuted Buddhism at that time (845).

One time, Wu-tsung called his uncle and, in order to punish him for getting up on his father's throne as a boy, hit him a strong blow. Afterwards, he revived him in the garden by urinating on him. Hsüan-tsung thereupon left the land of his father, shaved his head, and became a novice monk under Zen Master' Chih-hsien. However, he had not yet taken the complete precepts of the monk. He travelled about in many prefectures with Chih-hsien, and finally they arrived at Mt. Lu. Chih-hsien, taking a waterfall as his theme, composed this verse:

Dragon waters bore into the cliffs and  
scrape away the rocks,  
But they do not ever hate their labor.  
When you see it from afar,  
You fully know how high the dragon's  
mouth is.

He was testing the novice monk with this verse in an attempt to see what kind of person he was. The novice continued the verse:

Can the water in the valleys ever stop and  
rest?  
When the water finally reaches the sea, it  
becomes great waves.

When Chih-hsien heard these lines, he knew the novice monk was not an ordinary person.

Afterwards, Hsüan-tsung became the disciple of the National Teacher Yen-kuan Ch'i-an of Hang-chou, who made him a secretary-scribe. Zen Master Huang-po was made Yen-kuan's chief priest at that time. Consequently, Hsüan-tsung

and Huang-po sat side by side in the meditation hall. Once, when Huang-po went to the Buddha hall and bowed before the Buddha, Hsüan-tsung came and asked him, "Since the Buddha Dharma is an unobtainable Dharma which cannot be sought, and you cannot seek the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, why do you do this bowing?" When spoken to in this manner, Huang-po slapped the secretary with his palm and remarked gently, "I bow just because one cannot seek the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha." To this, Hsüan-tsung answered, "Too crude." Huang-po countered this with, "There isn't a single thing within this body which seeks the Three Jewels, so how can it speak either crudely or subtly?" And once more he slapped Hsüan-tsung with the palm of his hand. Hsüan-tsung left.

After Emperor Wu died, this secretary left the priesthood and became emperor. He repealed Wu-tsung's proclamation, which caused the persecution of Buddhism, and became its protector. While he was on the throne, he always valued zazen. When he was no longer emperor, he left his father's land again and visited the distant valleys of Mt. Lu, where he earnestly did zazen. It is said that after he left the throne, he did zazen day and night. Truly, with his father dead, brothers dead, mistreated by his nephew, and so on, he seemed to be in a pitiful situation. However, his diligence in the Buddha Way was as solid as diamond, and he never neglected practice. Truly, all this is a splendid historical fact concerning continuous practice the likes of which are rarely encountered.

As soon as the great master Hsüeh-feng Chen-chüeh (Seppō) who was the chief priest I-ts'un, had aroused the thought of enlightenment, he began to join the groups of disciples at Zen monasteries in all localities, where he would serve as the monk in charge of eating regulations. He always carried a large wooden spoon around with him. Thus, he wandered around to various monasteries in all the localities, where he would continue his own practice by serving the monks in the capacity of *tien-ts'o* (*tenzō*). Whether pressed

with work or at his leisure time, he never disliked where he was, and he never forgot to do zazen day and night. Up to the time he founded the training hall at Mt. Hsüeh-feng, he did not forget to share his life and death with zazen. While he was an itinerant priest, he visited Tung-shan Liang-chieh nine different times, and he visited T'ou-tzu Ta-t'ung three times; truly a rare seeker of the Way in this world.

In promoting the noble majesty of continuous practice among people, many people in the present time praise the exalted continuous practice of Hsüeh-feng. Even though the beginning of the search for the Way by Hsüeh-feng is no different from that of other people, the sharpness of his prajna insight and will make him far removed from all others. It was continuous practice which enabled him to do it. Disciples today ought to penetrate the depths of Hsüeh-feng's majestic continuous practice. When we quietly look back on his courage and diligence in practicing in all those places, truly, we understand that those things were the superb practice which is now being transmitted.

When you aspire to train under the enlightened masters, it is most difficult to catch any information you may be given when you inquire individually. There are not just twenty or thirty; there are hundreds and thousands of people making inquiry. Because you are studying Buddhism and seeking enlightenment under various masters, when you try out all their teachings, the sun will set and the day will completely end. Or else when the master addresses the students, they may have no talent and are utterly indifferent to the teaching. On the other hand, they may have talent, but the teacher concludes his remarks. It is indeed a rare occurrence, if you are a younger person or have started to practice late in life, to be able to sit on the far end of the sitting platform and hear the old-timers clap their hands and laugh to hear the Dharma taught. There are those who enter the training hall and those who do not, those who are touched by the master's teaching and acquire the Way, and those who do not. Days



and nights pass faster than an arrow; the body is more delicate than the dew on the grass. Even though there is a teacher, we get trapped by circumstances, and it is a pity we are unable to train. It is also a pity that even though we try to train, we cannot find a teacher. I have seen this situation with my own eyes.

The great masters possess the insight which enables them to know whether a person is wise or unwise, but it is indeed rare that diligent disciples find a happy situation near a great teacher. Long ago, when Hsüeh-feng climbed Mt. Lu nine times and went to T'ou-tzu three times, he surely put up with a lot of trouble and discomfort. You should sympathize with this commitment to continuous practice, and you should pity those who do not practice continuously with their very bodies.

#### NOTES

1. A pratyekabuddha is a person who is enlightened without the guidance of a master and who does not choose to share his understanding with others. Sometimes translated as "solitary Buddha," the pratyekabuddha is often found mentioned along with the arhat, who is also considered to be unwilling to mingle with ordinary beings and help them. Both the pratyekabuddha and arhat are thus examples of selfishness.

2. The "eight liberations" are eight forms of meditation. They are liberations in the sense that one is freed from some form of bondage in each.

3. The three parts of the canon are: 1) the collection of discourses or sermons (*sūtra*); 2) the collection of metaphysics or scholastic analysis of sutra terms and concepts (*abhidharma*); 3) the collection of monastic regulations and codes of conduct (*vinaya*). In other words, he knew all the vast collection of canonical literature.

4. The "three worlds" are the world of desire (*kāma-loka*), the world of form (*rūpa-loka*) in which desire is absent or minimized, and the formless world (*arūpya-loka*) where beings are formless. According to ancient Indian Buddhist cosmology, they are arranged vertically, with the *kāma-*

*loka* on the bottom containing the realms of man, animals, and the purgatories, as well as several classes of *deva* or celestial being.

5. These are special kinds of knowledge belonging to one who has reached the rank of arhat. They are: 1) insight into the past lives of all living beings; 2) clairvoyance, especially with regard to the future; 3) insight into the cessation of impurity.

6. Fa-ch'ang was also called Ta-mei (after the mountain where he lived), which means "great plum." Ma-tsu was acknowledging his attainment.

7. A monk lived at the foot of a mountain by himself, where he dipped water from a stream with a long-handled dipper. For many years, he did not shave his head as a monk should. Once another monk visited him and asked him, "What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the West?" The monk replied, "The stream is deep, the dipper handle is long." When his master heard of this later, he thought it was a remarkable thing to say. Taking a razor, he went to visit the unshaven monk. He asked the monk if he had indeed said such a thing, to which the monk replied that he had. So the master told him that if he was able to teach, he should shave his head. So the monk washed his head and knelt before his master, who then shaved his head. This story is recounted by Okada Gihō in volume 3 of *Shōbōgenzo shisō taiki*, p. 201 (Publishing Bureau of Hōzai University, Tokyo, 1953).

performed with total exertion, without omitting even a fragment of one's being from the act. This is what Dōgen means by *gūjin*, which I discussed briefly in a previous chapter. *Gūjin* is the performance of any act in total commitment and absorption. It is also action performed in the knowledge that the act or situation is the total manifestation of reality. It is to act as the Avalokiteśvara we really are.

What Dōgen Zenji and other Zen patriarchs taught, then, is drinking tea with the body which is all hands and eyes. It is, in the end, no more than this. Zen literature is almost devoid of supernatural objectives and values. No one seems ever to have wished to be like a god, to have paranormal powers, or even to be saintly. In fact, the Zen masters have always been distinctly unsaintly. There seems to be plenty of evidence, on the contrary, that the object was to gain the ability to live an ordinary life illumined by understanding, which is very human and very humanistic. Dōgen Zenji expresses this vision in terms of "eating rice and drinking tea."

The essay called *Gyōji* ("Continuous Practice") is a long description of the daily lives of the patriarchal masters from the time of Śākyamuni almost down to the time of Dōgen himself. These stories are almost completely devoid of the saintly, the miraculous, or the supernatural. Instead, it is very clear that all these men led ordinary, though active and creative, lives. Story after story is much the same: each master, when he himself was a student, studied with his own master, eventually realized his own awakened nature, and continued for the rest of his life to manifest this awakening in all his daily actions. Lin-chi planted cedars for the benefit of future generations, Ta-an ate rice and "raised an ox," and Pai-chang worked in the fields with his students well into old age, saying, "A day without working, a day without eating."

Dōgen Zenji calls this activity *gyōji*. *Gyō* is activity, performance, and training. It is not just any activity but activity illumined by understanding. *Ji* means "to maintain," "to hold on to." *Gyōji* is thus activity in which we constantly

make a strong effort to see and live our daily lives in the special way which constitutes Zen training. It is not merely being constantly busy as a result of some puritanical sense of the sinfulness of idleness. Nor is it a life of frenetic activity which is oriented towards the accomplishment of grand objectives. It is just eating, drinking, working, sleeping, and in general carrying on with one's ordinary life. It is life as continuous training. It is thus the life of desirelessness, without preferences, without picking and choosing. It is thus also the life of emptiness. To be empty is to be content with what one is, where one is, and with what one must do. Consequently, one lives life always here, in this place, now, and in this particular way, entering totally into each act without reservations or conditions, always actualizing, realizing, and giving life to all these simple beads of experience we call "now." This *gyōji*, consequently, is none other than living life with the thousand hands and eyes of Avalokiteśvara. In fact, says Dōgen, this is such a total activity that the Avalokiteśvara of Yün-yen and Tao-wu has countless hands and eyes. This activity, this practice, is galaxies away from the activity of two hands and eyes, of one hand and one eye, or, as is unfortunately usually the case, of one hand and no eyes at all.

Dōgen Zenji says in *Gyōji* that continuous practice is always now, for the nature of continuous practice is such that it cannot exist either in the past or in the future. To practice continuously means to be constantly actualizing our enlightened nature anew in each event, and we cannot do this if our minds dwell in the past or future. To be in the past or future mentally while we are physically in the present means that there is a dividedness in our lives, a lack of complete centeredness. Memory and phantasy *per se* are harmless, but a very real problem arises in our lives when we do not completely occupy the reality which is the present, which is all we will ever really have. This is how we kill our lives. But "now" and "continuous practice" are one and the same thing; when we are engaged in continuous practice, we are totally

immersed in "now"; when we totally immerse ourselves in the actuality of present circumstances, which means to see them and experience them as Avalokiteśvara, we are engaged in continuous practice. Thus Dōgen Zenji says that this "now" did not exist within us in the past in seedform, nor is it the case that first we engage in continuous practice and then "now" is manifested, but when the one exists, the other exists also for the first time.

What is this "now"? It is not really the "now" of time, which is the sliver-thin juncture between the past and future, although it may be helpful to think of "now" in that way. If "now" is the pure immediacy of lived experience in each event, then each "now" is doomed to cease and become memory, to be replaced by an entirely new "now," and this process goes on forever. In this sense, there is a stream of "nows," one following the other, but experientially they are not lived as units of time, as a present standing between past and future, but rather as just totally-lived beads of experience. But the point is, the totally-lived experience of one "now" does not guarantee that the next moment will also be totally lived in the same fashion. Consequently, to be engaged in continuous practice necessitates a constant effort to awaken again, over and over, as each new experience arises. Continuous practice is therefore a process of actualizing our inherent Buddhahood anew in each occasion in our daily life. There is no resting on our laurels. We must empty ourselves anew, over and over, and this is continuous practice, and it is the real "now."

The whole universe is an ocean of dazzling light. So says a line in the memorial service (*gakki*) recited in the Dharma hall on the occasion of remembering and honoring our spiritual ancestors. We need to proceed in our practice in the faith that the whole universe is indeed an ocean of dazzling light, the very body of the Buddha. We need also to proceed in the faith that if we practice with the urgency of someone trying to extinguish a flame in his hair, we will in time come to see

that the whole universe is an ocean of dazzling light. For purposes of our practice, it is important to remember that it is the whole universe which is an ocean of dazzling light, not just half the universe or the rather meager portion we have habitually come to associate with light. This means we can find that light everywhere, in every event, in every new "now" as it unfolds and becomes an actuality. None of these "nows" is deficient in light, no matter how deficient or terrible, ordinary or dull they may appear. Eating plain rice and drinking tea are part of this ocean of dazzling light. The task of the individual who trains in Zen is to learn to see this, for Zen practice is no more and no less than this.

How ordinary, plain and simple Zen is! It is a life with one's feet on the ground of one's native home, toes buried in the fragrant dirt. It is a life of appreciation for the wonderful taste of plain boiled rice and green tea. It is a life of constantly bowing to the Buddha whose face is seen shining from every entity, every event. Of course, this life is not enough for everyone, and so the world is a noisy arena of struggle and competition, envy, frustration, and insatiable desire for more and better. Plain rice and tea are not enough for us. Somewhere else, in a future time, we expect to find thorough satisfaction in comfort, security, power, and pleasure. Will we ever find it? Is it worth the price? Is there really anything better than plain rice and tea?