

Myōju

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Soto Zen Buddhism in Australia

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Karma: cause and effect are one

From a chosan talk given by Ekai Korematsu-oshō on 30 March 2002. Transcribed and edited by Johanna Verberne.

If there is a cause, there is a consequence. If we talk about karma in terms of cause and effect, anything we do, even moving an object from here to here, has a consequence. That understanding is the entrance to the Buddhist Way. An understanding of cause and effect is very important, it is the first thing we need to learn. Anything that has a life has a karma action, so cause and effect is of prime importance.

Karma is created in three different ways: one aspect is karma created by body actions and this is the most effective aspect; the second one is speech; and the third way is consciousness, thinking, and this doesn't have a strong consequence. Thinking alone is almost nothing, like bubbles; but, when it takes the form of speech, it creates a more powerful consequence; and, when it takes the form of physical action, it becomes even more powerful. If you become upset with someone, you might think 'I don't like that person,' and if you say to them, 'I don't like you,' that gives a very powerful kind of consequence. But the consequence is more powerful still when you act on it: 'I hate you! I am going to hit you!'—the impact is different.

So where we are now is a consequence of what karma has occurred in the past; and, where we are this moment, at the same time as being a consequence, is a cause for the future. So an action can be seen in two ways: it's not only the cause, it's also the consequence of something. The consequence of past action is present action; and an action right now is cause for a future action. So cause and consequence are one. This is the position our practice takes: two sides meet. In

our practice, cause and consequence are not two but one.

With this kind of understanding, sitting meditation is not a cause with the consequence of becoming a Buddha [laughs]. It is a cause—you are sitting with the back straight and meditating—but it's also the consequence, the Buddha. It's very strange, both at the same time are manifest. That is the wondrous Dharma called Pundarika Saddharma. It looks like a cause; but it's not only a cause, it's also a consequence—which is which? [Laughs.]

Pundarika is the white lotus. When the lotus opens there are already fruits in it. The two things come at once, both flowers and fruits. Even in the bud stage, when it hasn't yet opened, it still has the fruits in it—wondrous! Usually a plant's flower comes first, followed by pollination, then the petals fall and the fruits ripen. The lotus is different, even at the earliest stage. Cause and



From the Editor

Welcome to the summer issue of Myoju. In *Karma: cause and effect are one*, Ekai Korematsu-osho speaks about karma, the white lotus and the wonder of practice-enlightenment in which flower cause and consequence fruit are one. Ekai-osho also speaks on ghosts and monsters and points to the importance of not abusing inanimate objects. Also in this issue, John Bolton shares his experience of *Taking the Precepts* and relinquishes a few preconceptions, including his dream of being an exotic monk roaming the countryside. In *Dokusan with Dogen*, Leesa Davis shares her experience of the Shobogenzo and shows us how, through his writings, we can come face to face with Dogen-zenji in dokusan (a personal interview). In the Practice Point for this issue we take a look at food for our ears with *Zen Sound signals*, while a delicious summer salad recipe provides more conventional sustenance.

On behalf of the Myoju team, I wish you, your family and friends serenity and joy for the festive season and for the coming year.

Gassho,

Johanna Chisan Verberne



consequence are one and practice is fulfilled. Zen fruits appear. You don't know whether it's a flower cause or a consequence fruit, there are two in one. The metaphor of the flower is practice and the fruits mean enlightenment or Buddhas.

Practice-enlightenment is not two, it's one. Practice itself is already enlightenment. It's not after you practice hard that slowly, slowly you receive something—it's not like that: action itself is enlightenment. Doing something out of kindness is an action, to be kind is already enlightenment, you don't need to wait. Cause and effect are one. That is the ultimate teaching of karma.

Often karma is taught in a macro way to encourage people: 'If you do this, you will be rewarded;' 'If you practice hard in zazen you'll get better, your concentration will improve.' It's the same thing as telling children, 'If you eat this vegetable, after dinner you can have a chocolate'. We often use those kind of tricks to get children to eat vegetables because kids want the chocolate; but actually, eating the vegetable is already the chocolate! [Laughs.] People need occasional encouragement, we need candy. To advanced students who have practised for a long time, the teacher might say 'No more candy.' You should feel grateful if the teacher doesn't give you any candy, as that means your practise is advanced and you can do without it [laughs].

Cause and effect work in three different timeframes. Some causes have consequences at the same time—if you do this, that will happen, very quick. There is no delay. It's like a bucket full of water. If you push the water you receive a lot back [laughs]. There's no difference between cause and effect, giving and receiving are the same.

Another way that karma acts is when there's a cause and sometime later you receive the consequence. For example, you work hard trying to help someone for many years. For most of that time you don't receive any kind of return but, eventually, that person starts to understand and appreciate it and thanks you for your help. A later consequence: that's the second way karma works.

In the third way, there is a cause—you perform some action, kind or not, and then you completely forget about what you did. Suddenly people start to say 'Thank you very much, I really appreciate what you have done for me.' You think 'Huh? What did I do?' Or it can be the other way around, when you meet somebody they can be very angry with you and you haven't the slightest idea why. According to Buddhist teaching, karma works in different three ways and we need to be very careful about it. If we don't treat another thing in



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The views expressed in Myoju are not necessarily those of the Jikishoan Zen Buddhist Community or its Abbot, Ekai Korematsu-osho.

such a way as to help it fulfil its own life, or if we abuse something, it has a consequence.

If you do something nice to people you get something nice in return, like a smile. If you make them suffer you get an angry face. This is psychologically conditioned, karma. With inanimate things or animals, however, it's not the same as with humans because they don't talk. Even when you treat them very carelessly you may not receive the same message as when you do with humans.

It doesn't matter whether it's about people or about inanimate things. We get caught up in focusing on human relationships but it's the same with inanimate objects. Actually, karma in relation to inanimate objects is worse, because they don't talk and you don't receive the consequence clearly. Say you have a cup and you mistreat it and it breaks, it doesn't say to you, 'You have abused me,' it doesn't complain, it's just broken, so you don't receive the consequence clearly. If you mistreat people, however, they

..... surely complain; they may complain to others, they may become angry with you and they may cause a lot of problems, so we become preoccupied with human relationships and what other people think, but often we ignore inanimate things. We are now receiving karma from ignoring inanimate things. For example, we are suffering now with a lot of waste, wastefulness, rubbish and nuclear products. We have created something like a monster with a lot of impact and we many not be able to take care of it.

In the case of traditional farming, such as growing vegetables, which you eat, putting the waste into the compost and later returning it to the earth, the whole process is there, the whole life is complete, and that kind of thing doesn't lead to bad consequences.

I like to use the example of a pencil. When I was going to school, everyone had to have a knife to sharpen their pencil and, from this, we would learn that the life-span of a pencil was so much. In that way the pencil has its own life and is fulfilled. If we wasted it, our parents would be upset. At the end of primary school, the teacher introduced a wonderful gadget called a pencil sharpener. It's so fun to use—but, if you use it several times, the life of the pencil is over. Later, electric ones were invented, and they're worse, the life of the pencil can go so fast! Inventing a convenient means

shortens the pencil's life.

Abusing this life is also abusing something else. You know that pencils come from cutting down forest trees. A tree doesn't say anything, trees just grow, they don't complain, they have no way to complain; and people cut them down. Big trees are cut into pieces and are drilled with a hole for the lead and given a new life as pencils. We are creating monsters by doing such things and we are suffering from it. It has lead to a new vocabulary, such as saying that every year forests have declined by such an amount; but actually, it's our karma.

The problem with that kind of karma is that it is not necessarily you who has committed the abuse. Rather than the people who commit the abuse receiving the consequence, the consequence could be received by anyone.

I used to ask children, when they came to the temple, which they found more scary, monsters or ghosts. In Japanese ghost are called ume. Ghosts

..... are lost human souls which, having died, have trouble finding their way into the other space. They come back to the people

..... who are the cause of their death. Ghosts are about the human spirit. Monsters—we say obake—are a little different. They are animals or things—not humans—that turn into different beings.

In the case of the karma of ghosts, the one who gives, receives. You do something good, or give something out of kindness for others, and you receive something back. In the case of monsters, however, it doesn't work like that: the person who commits the abuse may not directly receive the consequence but rather the people around receive it. The person who pushes the button of a nuclear bomb should receive the consequence; but it's not like that, it's worse, people who have had no idea of it receive the bad consequence. So, in the case of human relationships, it's not so bad that you receive some bad karma or consequence—that comes back to you, you can handle it, it does nothing to the other person; but karma created by misuse of things has a greater consequence because they can't speak to you, because their Dharmas are already so universal. So Zen practice emphasises that, while human relationships are important, where you put things, how you walk, how you take care of things has a great consequence not only for you but also for everybody else.



Essendon Zendo moving

On 5 January 2003 the Essendon Zendo will be moving to 11 St James Street, Moonee Ponds. A dedication ceremony for the new Moonee Ponds Zendo will take place from 10am to noon Saturday 15 February 2003.

Ekai and Deniz would appreciate any able bodies who can help with the shifting process and rebuilding the zendo in the new garage.

2/23 Raleigh Street is now available for tenancy, for anyone looking to move to Essendon. It's a great location and would also provide a wonderful opportunity for closer access to the new zendo.

To inquire about renting 2/23 Raleigh Street or to offer your assistance with the move, please contact Deniz (9370 5847).

New Year Zazen

8.30pm to midnight
Tuesday 31 December 2002
Essendon Zendo

NEW YEAR RAFFLE

Jikishoan is conducting a New Year raffle with a prize of a seated Indian Buddha in the Mudra of Enlightenment. According to an Indian story, when Shakymuni Buddha was enlightened, an Indian god appeared and asked him for proof. Buddha's answer was this mudra, with the right hand pointing to the earth as witness to the reality of self and the left hand remaining in meditation.

Tickets are \$2 each or 3 for \$5 and the raffle will be drawn 2 March 2003 at Sunday Sanzen-kai. Tickets are available at Sunday and Thursday Sanzen-kai and at Thursday member sitting. Books of ten tickets are also available—please contact Julie (9499 2141).

RYE ZENDO

The Rye Zendo has temporarily closed for the holiday period. The group is now sitting at Mark Denovan's residence in McCrae at 7.30pm every second Wednesday of the month. Please phone Mark on 5986 3102 for details. Everyone is welcome.

SHOJI (SECRETARY) UPDATE

Jikishoan welcomes Erika Gaudlitz and Jane Farnan as new members and welcomes back Graham Cameron as a member.

The role of Sunday Sanzen-kai Jiroku (front desk) is now shared by six members—thank you to those participating in the roster.

Alison and John Hutchison have completed a spring clean of the membership database, developed a user manual and organised all the Shoji papers—many thanks to them both for their hard work and significant contribution. John Bolton has taken on the role of Membership Secretary and Alison Hutchison continues her involvement with the Shoji-ryo as maintainer of records.



Summer kitchen



Summer kitchen: South Pacific salad
Johanna Verberne

This delicious salad is a family favourite and perfect for hot weather.

Dressing
70ml (2/3 cup) peanut oil
85ml (1/3 cup) mixed lemon and lime juice
1 teaspoon castor sugar
2 cloves garlic, crushed
1/2 teaspoon dry English mustard
zest 1/2 lime
zest 1/2 lemon
salt and pepper

Combine the dressing ingredients and let stand for two hours at room temperature to allow the flavours time to get acquainted and glide into a tango or two.

2 mangoes, sliced
1/2 small pineapple, cubed
1 cucumber, peeled and thinly sliced
250g beans, blanched and halved
1 pear, chopped
125g roasted peanuts

Combine the mangoes, pineapple, cucumber, beans and pear and marinate in half the dressing for one hour in the fridge. If you can bear to, drain the salad; pour over the remaining half of the dressing and garnish with the roasted peanuts. Serves 6.

Adapted from The Gourmet Barbecue by Pip Bloomfield and Annie Mehra, Thomas Nelson, 1985.



Receiving the precepts

John Bolton

I was lying on the beach at Point Lonsdale thinking, 'What would I like to do before I die?'; and immediately I thought, 'Take the precepts.' I'd seen it done and wondered, 'When would it be right?'; 'Would it ever be right?'. Ekai said yes and that it could happen in two weeks' time. After a twenty-five year walk, a swift plunge down the mountain.

On the way to the ceremony my eldest son asked, 'Are you nervous?' and I was. At least, adrenalin was running through my veins. All the people and events that led to this afternoon rolled through my mind. The stories that Neil Cameron introduced me to through *Zen flesh, Zen bones*: There were two monks ... a man was running across a field ... a nun was ... and Kendall Mays, who dragged me kicking and screaming to zazen for the first time: 'You've heard all the stories there are to tell, but you ain't never sat in zazen, have you?'

When I bowed to the altar I thought God was going to strike me down. The sweat of pain during the first sit and 'Don't move,' from Deshimaru, 'Do not listen to what I say. This is it!'. The same incomprehensible and absurd instructions as the stories but it wasn't fun, it wasn't carefree monks roaming the countryside laughing and farting, but me in pain on a cushion. I was hooked.

When I got to Australia I went to another Zen group. What a let-down. There was no teacher, no proper zendo, they did kinhin all wrong, they did the chants wrong, nobody had a proper robe, it was poky and there was almost nobody there. I bought a zafu and sat on my own. Finally I attended a sesshin with the group. It took years to come off my high horse and understand the beauty of our practice. One night there were only three of us: Ino, Jiki jitsu and one sitter, alone in a house in Richmond.

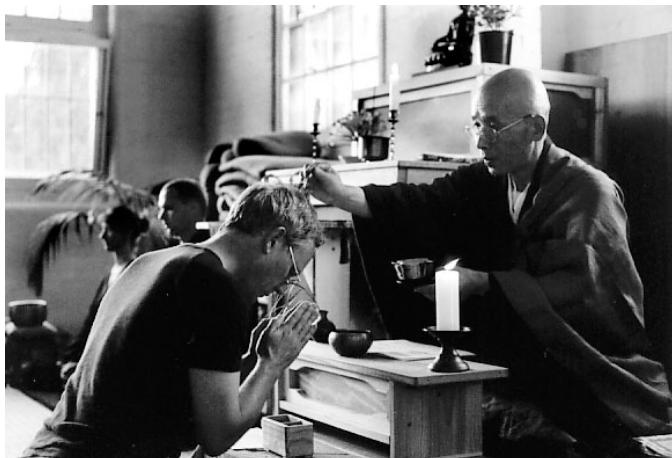
Then I came to Jikishoan. What a let-down. Yes, he was Japanese, but where was the discipline? Where the severity? He did the chants all wrong, the kinhin ... the teisho ...

Now I have applied to become a member of Jikishoan and feel blessed to have Ekai as my teacher. I am grateful to all the people who helped and attended the ceremony, and that my family were invited, and very grateful to them that

they came. They know that I go into my little room every morning and go off to sesshin, but that's the first time they've really tasted it.

I don't know what difference taking the precepts makes except that it feels more like me doing the practice now. Less like playing the part of an exotic monk, and more ordinary.

A Jukai (precepts) ceremony will be held at Sunday Sanzen-kai on 16 February 2003.



John receives the precepts from Ekai-oshō

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Dokusan with Dogen: reading the *Shobogenzo*

Leesa Davis

'The ninety-five chapters of the *Shobogenzo*
are footnotes to zazen'—Ian Kishizawa-roshi



Over seven centuries ago, in a distant part of the world, in a radically different cultural and historical context, Eihei Dogen-zanji expressed his realisation of the Buddha Way in a series of teachings, which continue to be the primary textual foundation of Soto school Zen practice.

The *Shobogenzo* (*The treasury of the true Dharma eye*) is a collection of discourses and essays given or written by Dogen-zanji during the years from 1231 until his death in 1253. The ninety-five fascicles that comprise the *Shobogenzo* cover almost every aspect of what Dogen considered to be the practice of the authentic Buddha Dharma that was transmitted to him by his master Tendo Nyojo in China.

The *Shobogenzo* as a practice document is Dogen's personal yet universal 'voicing of the way' (*dotoku*): personal in the sense of one individual's record of intimacy in practice; universal in the sense of Dogen's insistence on the inseparability and complete nonduality of realisation-practice for all beings. In this sense, what the *Shobogenzo* offers the Zen practitioner is the possibility of a real meeting, a most extraordinary meeting, within which is the invitation to penetrate the intimacy of Dogen's words in practice. Through the *Shobogenzo*, Dogen-zanji is constantly admonishing students to personally investigate his words with clarity and diligence in practice and it is through this personal investigation that reading the *Shobogenzo* can become a real meeting, a private dialogue, a *dokusan* with Dogen. To achieve this intimacy with Dogen, his instructions must be followed and one's very self must be diligently investigated in practice. This *dokusan* is open to all, because Dogen-zanji, like all compassionate teachers, meets each one exactly where they are. Each encounter with the *Shobogenzo* is therefore fresh and yet another entrance point to practicing Dogen's Way.

One key to approaching the *Shobogenzo* lies in understanding Dogen's purpose in writing it: the *Shobogenzo* was written for practitioners of the Buddha Way and, as such, is a transmission to be followed and penetrated. Upon returning from China, Dogen reports that he '... came home determined to spread the Dharma and to save living beings,' and that he '... would leave this record to people who learn in practice ... so that they can know the right Dharma of the Buddha's lineage.' Seen in this light, the *Shobogenzo* is exactly what its title claims to be: a voicing of the right Dharma Eye, the expression in words and letters of an enlightened mind. For the practitioner, the *Shobogenzo* is thus a kind of practice record, a descriptive manual of instructions, and a multi-faceted map to the understandings that evolve through the whole-hearted practice of zazen.

To Dogen, pursuing the truth and the practice of zazen are synonymous. The practice of zazen is the authentic gate to the Buddha Dharma—unhindered,

unbound, beginningless and endless. According to Dogen, there is no separation either in time or space between the zazen of Buddhas and patriarchs and each practitioner's very own zazen. Zazen is the now and here of the Buddha's teachings, the actualisation in this very body of the dynamic matrix of reality. As such, for Dogen, the expression of zazen cannot be fixed in any conceptual static absolute; rather, words and letters must themselves be liberated to be made intimate with the nature of things and to be in dynamic accord with reality. Not unlike the practice of zazen, reading the Shobogenzo can require stamina, resolve and intention. To intimately meet with Dogen-zenji, this literary dokusan cannot be an isolated event; rather it is an unfolding process of understanding that involves returning again and again to the text. The constant shifts, inversions and contradictions of commonly understood meanings in the Shobogenzo are reflective of Dogen's realisation of the dynamic, ever-shifting nature of 'how things are' and of the shifts in, and continually unfolding dimensions of, zazen practice itself.

The concerns and experiences of contemporary western practitioners of Soto

Zen, and the concerns and experience of a thirteenth century Japanese monastic can sometimes appear worlds apart but, despite historical and cultural differences, the very real bridge across this experiential gulf is zazen. In this sense, by engaging with the Shobogenzo in the context of zazen, all practitioners become Dogen-zenji's absolute contemporaries in the practice of enlightenment.

This article is indebted to ideas put forward in Thomas P. Kaulis' The incomparable philosopher: Dogen on how to read the Shobogenzo in Dogen Studies. Edited by William R. LaFleur, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1985 pp. 83–98 and draws from:

- Shobogenzo Bendowa:
a talk about pursuing the truth
- Shobogenzo Dotoku:
the voicing of the Way
- Shobogenzo Mitsugo: secret talk.

The translation of the Shobogenzo recommended by Ekai-oshō is Master Dogen's Shobogenzo (four volumes), translated by Gudo Nishijima and Chodo Cross, Windbell Publications, London 1994–1999.

On a portrait of myself

*Fresh, clear spirit covers old mountain man this autumn.
Donkey stares at the sky ceiling; glowing white moon floats.
Nothing approaches. Nothing else included.
Buoyant, I let myself go—filled with gruel, filled with rice.
Lively flapping from head to tail,
sky above, sky beneath, cloud self, water origin.*

Dogen-zenji 1249

from *Enlightenment unfolds: the essential teachings of Zen master Dogen*,
edited by Kazuaki Tanahashi



Practice point:

From a teisho given by Ekai Korematsu-oshō on 17 April 2001 at a Bendoho retreat. Transcribed and edited by Alesh Cech

Question: Can you say more about the sound signals in Zen practice?

There are two main signals in community Zen practice. One is the *han* (wooden board), the calling signal for zendo activities. The other is the *unpan* (metal plate), the signal for kitchen activities. Apart from different signal sources, there are also different ways that individual signals are composed for added clarity of meaning. When the *han* is hit three times, it signifies a call to the zendo. When a roll-down is heard, it announces that the present activity is coming to a close, as in towards the end of early morning zazen. At that time of morning, the *han* is joined by the *unpan*, which announces that breakfast is ready. In this way, the community is aware that one activity is ending, as another one is about to begin.

Through the day, the *han* and the *unpan* remain important signals for much that happens. Inside the zendo, the *keisu* (gong) and the *inkin* (small bell) are used as further activity signals within that space. In traditional Zen temples, a large temple bell, called *bonsho*, is used to give time signals to the community as a whole, both inside and outside. It is used to mark important points of the day, such as dawn, noon, sunset, bedtime. Another traditional signal in a Zen temple is the drum.

Depending on the way it is hit, it is used to signal different activities, such as work practice, formal tea ceremony and so on.

At a large established monastery, like Eiheiji, many different sound signals are heard, maybe fifty or sixty per day. Each signal has its own name and its own function. One of the first things that all new trainee monks have to do is to learn and memorise all signals in their correct order. This can be quite an intense exercise. It also means that the training of a Zen monk is really not just about sitting, it is also about learning and memorising. In practice, one can hear the same simple sounds over and over again, but never really register them, until one is asked to produce the same sounds oneself. Even after sitting and listening to them for years, one may not be able to perform them. It shows that there is a great difference between having a passive role, like a guest, or taking active responsibility.

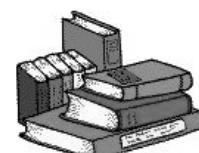
In Zen practice, sound signals can be opportunities for waking ourselves up, which is why they should be clear and penetrating. If they are too soft or vague, they miss their purpose by making everyone too comfortable and fall asleep. In this or that way, everyone is affected by the sounds around us. They are a kind of food for our ears, like the kitchen provides food for our stomachs. Simple and nice.



Jikishoan Library

The following books and audio tapes have been generously donated to the Jikishoan library since September 2002. For enquiries regarding borrowing material from the library, please contact Bev (9742 3191) or Hadyn (9706 0529).

- Dalai Lama in Australia 2002 lectures—*H. H. Dalai Lama* (*ten audio tapes*)
- Crooked cucumber—the life and Zen teaching of Shunryu Suzuki—*David Chadwick*
- Dogen studies—*William LaFleur (editor)*
- Mudra—a study of gestures in Japanese Buddhist sculpture—*E. Dale Saunders*
- The heart of the Buddha's path—*H. H. Dalai Lama*
- What is meditation?—Buddhism for everyone—*Rob Nairn*
- The Zen way—*The Venerable Myokyo-ni*
- An introduction to Zen Buddhism—*D.T. Suzuki*
- Branching streams flow in the darkness—Zen talks on the Sandokai—*Shunryu Suzuki*



Next Issue

The next issue of Myōju will be released at the autumn equinox on 21 March 2003. The deadline for content for the next issue is Friday 7 February 2003. If you would like to contribute to the next issue please contact Johanna Verberne on 0412 109 393 (AH). If you would like to advertise in the next issue, please contact Karen Threlfall on 9859 6329 (AH).

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