

70-07-12

CONTINUATION OF EKO II

July 12, 1970

The second recitation of the *Prajna Paramita Sutra* we dedicate to the *arhats*, and to the various sages in the world. This is the translation Mel and I made” “What we pray is that the Three wisdom and the Six Unrestricted Ways of the *arhats* may be always with us in our unceasing effort to renew Buddha’s way to save all sentient beings from the world of suffering and confusion...” The world of suffering and confusion means “Mappo.” “...and to keep Buddha’s Way always new to our world always...” That is the spirit of Dogen. We understand the Three Periods of Buddhism as just the skillful means of Buddha to encourage people to practice our way. “And we encourage ourselves, and we pray to the *arhats* to encourage us to continue our practice even in our adversity, and to keep the Wheel of the Dharma turning forever, and to avert the disasters of fire, water, and wind, and the calamities of war, epidemic and famine.” That is actually what it says in this *Eko*. After reciting the sutra, as you know, the *Doan* recites the *Eko*.

And I have to explain more about the meaning of “we pray” in the second paragraph of the *Eko*. Actually, according to the usual way of observing the ceremony Zen Buddhists understand prayer in the usual way, but according to Dogen Zenji there is no need for us to expect help from the outside. He says, “We are protected actually from inside, firmly, so we don't have to expect any protection from outside.” That is the spirit. We are protected from inside by ourselves, always, incessantly, so we don't have to expect any help from outside. Actually it is so. Our belief is so, but when we recite the sutra we apply the usual way of dedication. And this is also Dogen’s idea. He says, for instance, that we do not have any idea of dirty or pure, or any idea of calamity or disaster, but even so, he says, we have the practice of cleaning the restroom. That is a kind of practice. Even though your face, or mouth, or body is clean, when you get up you should wash your face and clean your mouth. We do it as a practice, not because it is dirty. That is our practice. So if you think cleaning the restroom is dirty work, that is the wrong idea. The rest room is not dirty. Even though you don't clean it, it is clean, or more than clean. But we have to clean it as a practice, not because it is dirty. If you do it because it is dirty, that is not our way.

So far we explained “*Goriki*” and “*Hachige*,” and the next phrase is “*Gunjo o musho ni michibiki*.” “*Gunjo*” means “all sentient beings.” “*Gun*” is “various folks.” “*Jo*” means “living being” so it means “sentient beings.” “*Musho*” means “*arhat*.” It is another name for “*arhat*.” Here “*Gunjo*” means “sentient beings who are in confusion and suffering.” “*Gunjo o musho ni michibiki*,” “to lead sentient beings who are in defilement to arhatship by the unrestricted power of the “*arhats*.”

“*Sammon no nirin*.” “*Sammon*” means “main gate of the temple,” but sometimes “*Sammon*” means “temple.” Sometimes it is one of the buildings which is the gate, but sometimes it means all the temple. “*Sammon no nirin*.” “*Nirin*” is the “Two wheels.” The Two Wheels are the Dharma wheel and the avarice wheel, or materialistic support. Our

belief is that if the Dharma wheel is turning then the materialistic wheel will be turning too. That we are not supported by anyone means our Dharma wheel actually is not going. So we should know that. If our Dharma wheel does not go, if we are not supported by people, it means that our Dharma wheel is not going. This is very true.

Since I have known this world of Dogen Zenji I have experienced it, I have tested it, whether it is true or not, especially during the war when I had not much to eat. Most priests worked to earn some money to support themselves, and to support their families. But my belief was that if I observed the Buddhist way faithfully someone will support me. If no one supported me it meant that Dogen's word was not true. So I never asked anyone to give anything to me, and I just observed the Buddhist way, without working as a teacher, or as a clerk of the town office. I raised some vegetables and sweet potatoes. That is why I know how to raise vegetables pretty well. I cultivated my temple garden; I had a pretty spacious temple garden in front of the building, so I dug (?) The garden out and took out all the stones, and put manure in it, and I was trying to raise sweet potatoes. And some villagers came and helped me. And I had a good crop.

One day my neighbor came to help me cook. When she opened the ricebox there was no rice at all. I had a pretty big rice box. She was quite astounded. So she brought some rice, not much as she didn't have so much rice. But my neighbor and my members collected some rice and I had quite a few members so I had quite a lot of rice. But when people found out that I had a lot of rice they came to the temple, so I gave my rice to them. The more I gave my rice to them, the more rice I was given. But at that time most people, city people, went to the farmers families and changed their dresses or *geta* or whatever it may be, something good was changed to food, potatoes, or rice, or sweet potatoes or pumpkin. But I had no such difficulty. Most of the time I had plenty of food. But I didn't feel so good to eat something special, something different from the usual people, so I tired to eat the same food which was given to us. Tassajara food is wonderful, strong and rich, in comparison to the food we had in war time. So I don't have any complaint about food. And if you observe our way strictly we will surely be protected by Buddha. That is very true. We should trust people, and we should trust Buddha.

Since then, since war time Japanese priests have started to wear your suits, giving up their robes (not giving up because when they have funeral service or memorial service they wear their robes, but usually they don't wear them). I don't feel so good about that. So that is why I always wear my robe. When I was coming to America almost all the priests who were going abroad wore good suits, and shiny shoes. But their heads were not shiny. Their hair was pretty long, and well combed. But their shoes were very shiny. With shiny shoes, and new suits, they came to America because they thought that in order to propagate Buddhism in America they had to be something like the American people. But even though they buy the best suits and the best shoes, Japanese are Japanese. They cannot be American people. And American people will find some fault in the way they wear the suits or shoes. Anyway Japanese are Japanese, so that is one reason why I didn't come to America in a suit.

Another reason was that I was disgusted with priests who gave up their robes and changed their robes into suits to support themselves when Dogen said we are protected from within firmly. Why do we expect support from outside. That is our spirit. Most priests in Japan do not respect their way, their practice. Here it says, "What we pray is that the Dharma wheel and the material wheel goes smoothly forever." To observe this kind of ceremony is important. Not because we have to beg *arhats* to help us, but because that is the way which we have been observing for a long time. And this is how to repay the benevolence of the Buddha and *arhats*. Buddha and the *arhats* are the people who supported themselves by their practice only, so if we pay full respect to the *arhats* we will be also protected: "*Sammon no nirin*." "Two wheels of the temple may go smoothly." We say, "May the food wheel and the Dharma wheel go smoothly, and may the calamities of the country and the temple, calamities like war, epidemic, and famine; or fire, water and wind, be averted." These calamities are the calamities we will have in the last period, *kalpa* of time. After many aeons of time all the universe will have a big disaster. To some extent our universe will go on, and on, and will be built firmly, and firmer and firmer. And when the universe gets to some point it will enter into the process of destruction. That is also a kind of good means of Buddha. We don't know if we are going to the way of destruction. Personally, from the time that we were born, we are in the process of death, but that is just our understanding. But at the last period of time we will have a big disaster. The small disasters are war, epidemic and famine; the big ones, flood, fire and hurricane. "May those disasters be averted from us." That is what we recite in the second dedication of the *Prajna Paramita Sutra*.

The words say, "I pray, I beg, or may such and such," but the spirit is different. So when you recite the sutra you should express this spirit. We should not observe our way, or recite our sutra to ask the *arhat* to help us. That is not our spirit. When we recite the sutra the feeling we create here is the feeling of non duality, perfect calmness and strong conviction in our practice. That kind of feeling should be always with us. If that kind of feeling is always with us we will be supported anyway. If our practice becomes involved in dualistic, selfish practice, to support our building, or organization, or to support our personal life, there is not much feeling in our dedication. Only when we have strong confidence in our way, and without expecting anything, with deep calm feeling, we recite the sutra, there, there is our actual practice. That is the context of our practice, the meaning of our practice. So if you cannot express that kind of feeling in your way of dedication that is not our way. So Dogen says, "If we do not practice our way with everyone, with all sentient beings, with everything in the world, or in the cosmic stage, that is not Buddhist way." So the spirit of zazen practice should always be with us, especially when we recite the sutra or observe the ceremony. The spirit should be always there, that kind of spirit. Not dualistic, selfish spirit, but calm, and deep, and firm; with firm conviction, we should observe our way. That is actually the *arhats* unrestricted power.

So clairvoyance, or to hear something from a distance is just a part of our unrestricted power. Our power should be always with all beings, and our everyday life should be protected by that kind of power which pervades everywhere, which is everywhere. That is the last unrestricted power of the *arhats*, and the most important

power of the *arhats*. When we observe our way in that way, even though you want to create *karma* it is not possible because then we are always one with the whole Buddha world where there is no karmic activity. That which is going on in the world of Buddha is just Buddha activity. There is nothing but Buddha activity in the realm of the Dharma world. In that way, when we observe our way we do not create any karma. we are beyond the karmic world. So with this spirit, and with this understanding we should observe our way. So when we observe our way with this understanding, there must be the actual spirit of this kind.

Nowadays, as our world becomes busier and busier, even in a big monastery in Japan, they have not much time to dedicate our way without any idea of time, so their *doans* are always watching the time. "What time is it?" How many memorial services may we have? Oh, ten more memorial services, then our breakfast will be very late, so let's make it faster." the sutra chanting becomes faster and faster. They know how many services they will before they start the morning service, so from the beginning they will chant very fast. They may think if they recite many sutras they will be supported better, but actually it is not so. It is the same. Even though you cannot observe ten memorial services if you observe one or two with our spirit, you will be supported anyway.

If we are involved in the idea of time too much, or feeling of the members too much, we will lose our way, and in this way we lose our practice, and naturally the people will lose Buddhism. The members will think they have a priest, but the priest will not be a priest because he is already involved in dualistic practice, involved in the busy life, in the busy world, the busy, mundane world. So there are no more priests. Even though priests are there, they are not practicing the priest's way. So we say they cover their pan with the cover of the toilet. They mixed up worldly practice and priest's practice. That is how we lose our way. So when priests do not observe our way like priests we are a toilet cover, not cover of pots and pans. To help others does not mean to help others for their convenience sake. Priests may be the most troublesome people. They may be very difficult to handle. Even if they are offered a million dollars, they may say, "Oh, thank you," and if they are offered even one penny they may say, "Thank you." That's all. They are very difficult to handle. But when people want a real priest they should handle the priest carefully. They shouldn't mix up priests with someone else.

So we should not lose this confidence within ourselves. We don't have to say words, but within ourselves, we must have this strong confidence in Buddha's way, and we should be supported from within, not from outside. So Buddhists should be Buddhists completely. When a Buddhist really becomes a Buddhist he will be supported as a Buddhist.

The *Eko* continues like this: "We dedicate the merit of the recitation of this *Prajna Paramita Hidraya Sutra* to the triple treasures, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and to the sages in the sea of the fruitful world of Buddhahood, and to the sixteen *arhats* and their followers who attained the supreme attainment of arhatship. What we pray is that the Three Wisdom and the Six Unrestricted Ways of the *arhats* may be always with us

in our unceasing effort to renew Buddha's way forever, to save all sentient beings from the world of suffering and confusion, and to encourage us to continue our practice even in our adversity, and to keep the wheel of the Dharma turning forever, and to avert the destruction of fire, water, and wind, and the calamities of war, epidemic and famine."

This is the translation of the *Eko*. It may be a good idea to recite this *Eko* in English, after reciting the English translation of the *Prajna Paramita Hydraya Sutra* in the second service. Tomorrow I will explain the third *Eko* which is dedicated to our Patriarchs.

Thank you very much.

EZT – early SFZC transcript – 70-07-12
