

# Komyozo Zanmai

The Practice of the Treasury of Luminosity

Koun Ejo Zenji

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## A brief biography of Koun Ejo (1198-1282)

Koun Ejo was ordained in 1215 and studied Tendai, Shingon and Jodo (Pure Land) Buddhism before moving on to study under the Daruma school Zen master, Kakuan from 1222 until 1228, when Kakuan's temple was destroyed by fire. It's believed that it was shortly after this that he first met Dogen who, after his experiences in China, had returned to Kennin-ji temple in Kyoto.

Ejo formally joined Dogen's community at Kannon-Dori (later renamed Kosho-ji) temple at Uji, in 1235. His arrival also attracted several other Daruma School monks who joined Dogen's temple at the same time. Soon after this, Ejo became Dogen's personal assistant, following him to Eihei-ji in this capacity when the temple was founded around 1243.

On Dogen's death in 1253, Koun Ejo succeeded him as Abbot of Eihei-ji of which (with a brief interlude in which he delegated the abbacy to Tetsu Gikai) he was abbot until his death in 1280.

Koun Ejo wrote little of his own apart from *Komyozo Zanmai*, but he took a major role in formalising the literature surrounding Dogen's establishment of the Soto Zen school. It is through Ejo's dedicated work that we not only have the *Shobogenzo Zuimonki* (a record from Dogen's early years at Kannon-Dori, transcribed by Ejo) but - even more importantly - that Dogen's masterwork, the *Shobogenzo (The Treasury of the True Dharma Eye)* survive to this day.

### *Kyomozo Zanmai* in the Kodo Sawaki / Taisen Deshimaru tradition

*Komyozo Zanmai* was composed by Ejo in 1278, in his later years. Taisen Deshimaru was fond of *Komyozo Zanmai*, as was his own teacher, Kodo Sawaki, who called the text, '*the essence of the Shobogenzo*' - high praise indeed.

Both these Zen masters, toward the ends of their own lives, made commentaries on the text.

Philippe Coupey, in his book *The Song of the Wind in the Dry Tree*, Hohm Press (2014), gives his own commentary on the final section of direct guidance, the location of which is indicated in this edition by a footnote.

## *Kyomozo Zanmai*

The Treasury of the Eye of Reality already contains an essay on Luminosity.<sup>1</sup> I am writing this only because I want to bring out this essential matter further because the practice of the Treasury of Luminosity is the essence of the Buddha Way.

"*Working unseen, secretly active*"<sup>2</sup>, one's own practice practises all beings. This is clear to those long-time practitioners who have "*entered the room*" of the Master.

What we call the Treasury of Luminosity is the source of all Buddhas, the true nature of all beings, the Total Body of all things, the treasury of the Radiance of subtle perceptions and complete Awakening. The three bodies of the Buddhas, the four wisdoms,<sup>3</sup> and the practice of each particle containing the infinite particles of Totality are all found here.

The Flower Garland Discourse<sup>4</sup> says, "*The radiance of Dipamkara Buddha<sup>5</sup> is the greatest of auspicious signs. The blazing of the light of that Buddha here in this Hall means that this place is auspicious.*" Actually, this radiance of Dipamkara Buddha pervades everywhere without picking and choosing this place as sacred and that place as ordinary. As for the Buddha entering the Hall, as soon as you have heard the opening words of the Discourse "*Thus have I heard...*" he has already entered. Since "*this place is auspicious*", it is here that Shakyamuni Buddha receives teachings from Dipamkara Buddha.

If there were any way to attain this luminosity which pervades past, present, and future then there would have to be something other than it to attain it.

In the Vast Inherent Radiance Discourse<sup>6</sup> in the chapter on Dharani it says,

*Then the Generous One said to Vajrasattva, 'The aspiration for Awakening is the ground, great compassion is the root, and skillful means the fruition. Master of secrets, what is Awakening? It is knowing your mind as it is. This is utter, complete and perfect Awakening in which nothing is attained. Why? The form of Awakening is unknowable and inconceivable. Why [is nothing attained]? Because Awakening is formless. Master of secrets, the formlessness of all things is just this form of Space.*

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<sup>1</sup> Dogen Zenji's "*Komyo*" chapter in *Shobogenzo*.

<sup>2</sup> A reference to Dongshan Liangjie's "*Hokyo Zanmai, The Samadhi of the Precious Mirror*".

<sup>3</sup> The Mirror-like Wisdom, the Wisdom of Subtle Penetration, the Wisdom of Equality, the All-accomplishing Wisdom.

<sup>4</sup> Avatamsaka Sutra.

<sup>5</sup> Nento-butsumi. Blazing Lamp Buddha.

<sup>6</sup> Mahavairocana Sutra.

Elsewhere, the Discourse says,

*Master of secrets, the practice of the Vast Path is awakening the mind which moves into the unfabricated, guided by selflessness. Why? Those who have practised this in the past have seen that the five aggregates and the elements have no foundation, are illusory, like mirages, shadows, echoes, circles drawn by moving flames, a city in the clouds. Master of secrets, thus they let go of what is without self and the gathering of mental factors self-awakens as the non-arising nature of Awareness. Why? There is nothing that can be known before or after Awareness and so just realising primordial [original] Awareness leaps over two great aeons of gradual practice.*

Since "nothing can be known before or after", the Luminosity of Vairochana or Inherent Radiance is the primordial Awareness which never wavers.

The Flower Garland Discourse also says,

*The body of the Buddha blazes forth a radiance of infinite colours, perfectly pure, which covers all lands like overarching clouds, everywhere presenting the virtues of Awakening. All who are illumined by this radiance rejoice and suffering beings are freed from pain. All are moved to reverence and recognize their own capacity to open to Openness. This is the free functioning of Awakening."*

This Discourse has a chapter called "Awakening Through Luminosity," which says,

*At that time the light moved past a hundred thousand worlds and illumined a million worlds to the east. The same happened in the south, west, north, the four intermediate directions, and upwards and downwards. Everything in all of these worlds was clearly seen. At that time, in each place, Manjusri, being in Openness, spoke to the Buddha in each place this verse:*

*The Buddha is utterly free,  
transcending all realms, supported by nothing,  
endowed with all virtues,  
free from all existences,  
unstained, utterly released,  
free from fabrication, unobscured,  
His form and nature are beyond all measures.  
In seeing him, all praise him.  
His Luminosity is everywhere, pure clarity.*

*The obstructions of the senses are washed away.  
Unmoving, he is free from both extremes of  
being and nothingness [no-being].  
This is the knowledge of the Buddha.*

The knowledge of Awakening is luminosity, the practice of unmodified Radiance that transcends the extremes of mundane and sacred, ultimate and relative. It is the luminosity of Inconceivable Knowing, of which Manjusri is the embodiment. You embody this in the great ease of *shikantaza*, just sitting.

Thus, Vairochana instructed the Master of Secrets, "*the practice of the Vast Path is awakening the mind which moves into the unfabricated, guided by selflessness*".

Sengcan, the Third Chinese Ancestor, said, "*Do not look for enlightenment, just abandon deluded views.*"

There can be no self in practising the path of the unfabricated, the Treasury of Luminosity, or views of self at all. Self and views are different names for the same thing, the face of a ghost or the face of a spirit. There is just this luminosity. It is not a matter of establishing any opinions about anything at all, from the views of self and what belongs to self or to ideas about the Buddha and the Dharma.

Haven't you heard? "*Perfect knowing is like a great ball of flame.*"<sup>7</sup>

The Lotus Discourse says, "*At that time the Buddha released a blaze of light from the white hair curled between his brows which illuminated eighty thousand worlds to the east, pervading them all, to the depths of the lowest hells of contracted experience to the summit of the heaven realms of ecstasy above*". This miraculous sign of light is the supreme and subtle luminosity realised by the Buddhas.

When Maitreya asked Manjusri what this sign portended, Manjusri explained, "*This auspicious sign appeared in ancient times when the Sunlight and Moonlight Buddha<sup>8</sup> taught the Vast Path while entering the Harmony of the sphere of Infinite Meaning. And now the Buddha Shakyamuni must be about to present the teaching of the Lotus of Wondrous Reality which has been kept in mind by the Buddhas for the illumination of beings.*"

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<sup>7</sup> This saying is attributed to Nagarjuna as will be made clear later in the text. However, it is also strongly associated for the Soto Lineage with the "Jewel Mirror samadhi."

<sup>8</sup> Candrasuryapradipa

This light should be understood as the supreme and vast radiance which contains Infinite Meaning. The great being Manjusri was formerly the wakeful one Sublime Light<sup>9</sup> and was the eighth son of the Sunlight and Moonlight Buddha who taught him to practise supreme enlightenment. The previous Buddha to Shakyamuni was Dipamkara. The practice of our Lineage is sitting in the Treasury of Luminosity and this has been received directly through the transmission from Dipamkara and Shakyamuni Buddhas.

What other teaching is needed? This luminosity is not one thing for sages and another for sentient beings. It is the Single Path transmitted from the past to right now. It does not need to acquire anything, or get rid of anything. After this, who can turn back and try to fit back into the hunched postures of conventional views and social relations? It cannot be grasped, cannot be avoided. How can you take the sufferings of delusionary desiring and despising<sup>10</sup> seriously?

To go on. The Lotus Discourse's chapter on "Being in Ease" says, "*Manjusri, those opening to Openness and Vastness abide in flexibility and peace, they are kind and not rowdy, their minds are unclouded. They do not worry thoughts with their minds but see the true nature and so do not act like idiots.*" Sitting is like this, isn't it? In sitting, one is aligning oneself with Great Luminosity.

A verse in that chapter says,

*The deluded conceive of things as  
existent or non-existent,  
real or unreal,  
born or unborn.  
In a clear space, settle attention,  
sit steady and without flinching,  
like Mount Sumeru.  
See that all things are without substance,  
like space, with no solid foundation,  
neither born nor arising.  
Unmoving, tireless,  
practise this one thing.  
This is the place which draws near to it.*

These are quite direct instructions which present the supreme Way through getting straight to the heart of it, setting aside conventions.

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<sup>9</sup> Varaprabha

<sup>10</sup> the Three Poisons: greed, anger and delusion

The Great Master Bodhidharma was asked by Emperor Wu of China about the first principle of the holy Teachings. Bodhidharma said, "*Vast emptiness, nothing holy*". This is the great ball of flame, the luminosity of the Transmission of our Awakened Ancestors. Clear right through and on all sides, with nothing inside of it at all. Outside of this luminosity there is no other practice, no other teaching. So how could there be any objects to know, let alone the cultivation of any particular state or trying to cure yourselves of some imaginary disease?

The emperor asked Bodhidharma, "*Who is this standing before me?*" Bodhidharma said, "*Don't know.*"

This is the single radiance of Openness.

Zen Master Xuedou's verse on this koan states:

*The holy truths are empty?*

*What is the secret here?*

*Once more: 'Who is this standing here before me?'*

*'Don't know!'*<sup>11</sup>

Enter into this koan and you release the body into luminosity, the Total Field into luminosity and realise the great ease.

Great master Yunmen<sup>12</sup>, in the thirty-ninth generation from the Buddha said to the assembly, "*Everyone has this luminosity but when they look for it they don't see it. What is this luminosity?*" As no one could answer, he answered for them, "*The Monks' Hall, the Buddha Hall, the Kitchen Hall, the Gate.*"<sup>13</sup>

Now when this great master speaks of this luminosity that everyone has, he doesn't say that it is something that will appear later or that it happened in the past. It is not something that can be seen by standing aside from it because everyone is this luminosity. This is what we call the luminosity of vast and perfect knowing. You should understand this clearly and apply it through skin, flesh, bones, and marrow.

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<sup>11</sup> The Blue Cliff Records, case 1.

<sup>12</sup> Yunmen Wenyan (Yun-men Wen-yen; Ummon Bun'en), 864-949. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 6, 8, 14, 15, 22, 27, 34, 39, 47, 50, 54, 60, 62, 77, 83, 86, 87, 88; Records of Silence 11, 19, 24, 26, 31, 40, 61, 64, 78, 82, 92, 99; Gateless Gate 15, 16, 21, 39, 48.

<sup>13</sup> The Blue Cliff Records, case 86. See also Dogen's consideration of this koan in "Komyo: Luminosity." Actually, Yunmen begins by quoting a verse by Tanxia Tianren (739-824) and concludes it all by shouting, "I'd rather have nothing!" See the Yunmen lu.

This luminosity is all beings and Shakyamuni and Maitreya are only its attendants.<sup>14</sup> This subtle luminosity is not greater in Buddhas and less in beings. Everything arises in it. The Total Field is this great ball of flame.

Yunmen asked, "*What is this luminosity?*" The assembly had nothing to say. Even if a hundred thousand *bon mots* were uttered, still there would be "nothing to say."

And so Yunmen answered for them, "*The Monks' Hall, the Buddha Hall, the Kitchen Hall, the Gate.*" Answering for them is his answer; his answer answers for luminosity, answers for "*not seeing it,*" answers the assembly's answer of not answering. This is the practice of the Treasury of Luminosity blazing and awakening as radiance.

So, it is not a matter of whether you are just "ordinary folk" or "Buddhas." It isn't a matter of being a sentient or insentient being. Always shining as the ten directions, this beginningless luminosity is without location. This is why "*you don't see it.*" It is this "*what.*"

Moving in this darkness, it is inconceivable, even if you think about it for numberless aeons.

Another time:

*A monk asked Yunmen, "The light shines silently through numberless worlds..."  
Before he could finish phrasing his question, Yunmen snapped, Isn't that the saying of  
that famous poet Chang Zhou?<sup>15</sup>  
The monk stammered, "It is."  
Yunmen said, "Failed."<sup>16</sup>*

This old Buddha Yunmen! His eyes blaze like falling stars, his mind is swifter than a thunderbolt. At this point the monk was struck speechless. How about you? Would you have embarrassed yourself?

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<sup>14</sup> See Gateless Gate, case 45.

<sup>15</sup> Chang Zhou's exact dates are unknown. The Five Lamps With One Source (Wudeng Huiyuan) has this verse attributed to him:

*The light shines silently through numberless worlds, sages and fools and all beings are in my abode.*

*When no thought arises, the whole world is exposed. If the six senses move at all, they are blocked by clouds.*

*Trying to cut away delusion just makes it worse. Seeking for the ultimate you are way off track.*

*Live this life without obstruction and nirvana and birth and death are just colours in a dream.*

<sup>16</sup> Gateless Gate, case 39.

*Zen Master Xuefeng*<sup>17</sup> taught the assembly, "All the Buddhas of the three times turn the Wheel of Reality in the midst of fire."

*Yunmen said, "The flames present the Teachings of the Buddhas of the three times. All the Buddhas do is stand there and listen!"*

The luminosity of these flames is the seat of the Awakening of the Buddhas of the three times, it is the teacher of all the Buddhas. Thus, all Buddhas are always presenting the Teachings in the midst of the numberless forms and yet remain unmoving from the seat of Awakening which is the luminosity of complete and perfect release.

Open the ears without closing the eyes. This great ball of flames is not in front or behind. It is the Body of Totality.

Do not continue to conceive of yourself in terms of obstructions and limitations, squeezing out thoughts of self and poverty, of being a deluded being. This the demonic defilement of the Wheel of Reality turned by the Buddhas.

The presentation of the Teachings by the flames pointed out by Xuefeng and elaborated by Yunmen is cutting to the truth of it without bothering about niceties. This presents the supreme Way that the Buddha taught throughout each day of his life.

In Xuefeng's speaking of these words, everything is burnt within these flames and there is no escape from it. Chanting the sutras, practising great bows, raising the feet and setting them down step after step; everything is the display of luminosity's vast activity.

Some people look for this as some underlying entity or try to get rid of their thoughts and experiences. They do not understand this hidden essence. Some doubt it all, and go about their business dwelling in the cave of ghosts. Some act like they are diving into the depths of the ocean to count the grains of sand on the ocean floor. Some are like mosquitoes, buzzing against a paper screen.

Leaving aside the possibility of just falling into words, can you say anything?

Instead of wasting time trying to wash dirt with mud, Zen monks must first of all know what they are saying when they ask a question. If we are talking about "*light*

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<sup>17</sup> Xuefeng Yicun (Hsueh-feng I-ts'un; Seppo Gison), 822-908. He appears in Blue Cliff Records: Bi-yen lu 5, 22, 49, 51, and 66; Records of Silence 24, 33, 50, 55, 63, 64, 92; Gateless Gate 13.

*shining silently through numberless worlds,"* why should these be the words of someone else like a famous poet or the Buddha? Are they your words? Are they anyone's words? Listen carefully: "*The Monks' Hall, the Buddha Hall, the Kitchen Hall, the Gate.*"

*Great master Changsha* <sup>18</sup> *said to the assembly, "The whole world is reflected in this monk's eye. The whole world is contained in everyday talk. The whole world fills your body. The whole world is your own luminosity. Throughout the Total Field there is no one that is not who you are."* <sup>19</sup>

Deep practice of the Way requires tireless exertion and confidence in what is true. Unless you join the Lineage of the Buddhas, life after life, how can you understand anything that I say at all? Do not move away from it.

Now, "*the whole world is the eye of this monk*" says Changsha. The whole of space is this whole body-mind. He does not grasp at the sacred or avoid the profane. He does not say that deluded beings don't have it, while sages do. He just points directly to your own luminosity. So don't leave it all up to Changsha.

This teaching presents it all inside of your nostrils, it gives practical advice with your eyes. Some people bring up old koan as examples and models but never have the least insight about their own lives. This is like being born into a wealthy family but having no clothes.

So, fools who hear some talk about "luminosity" might think that this is like the light of fireflies, like the light of lanterns, like the light of the sun or moon, the gleaming of gold or jewels. They look around for something that they already know. Looking for the blaze of radiance, they concentrate on their little minds and try to figure it out, trying to turn it into the realm of emptiness and silence. So they freeze and hide in motionlessness. They are unable to give up looking for some kind of thing that they can acquire. Or they think mystical thoughts and go on and on about how special it is. There are only too many like this, sleeping with open eyes, just bags of borrowed rice.

If it were really some inconceivably mysterious thing, why do you think that you can get at it with your thoughts? This is the confusion spread by the Buddha-devil that sets up little states as [though they were] the same as the practice of the Buddhas.

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<sup>18</sup> Changsha Jingcen Zhaoxien (Ch'ang-sha Ching-t'sen Chao-hsien, Chosa Keishin), d. 868. A Dharma-heir of Nanquan Puyuan and Dharma-brother of Zhaozhou Congren. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 36; Records of Silence 79. See Dogen's Komyo and Jippo.

<sup>19</sup> Again, see Dogen's "Komyo: Luminosity".

This is why the First Ancestor called it, "*Vast emptiness, nothing holy*" and the practice as "*not knowing*". I hope you understand.

Zen Master Changsha said,

*Students of the Way who do not discern the truth are like that because they won't abandon their little consciousnesses. Although endless aeons of birth and death are rooted there, they conceive of it as the Original Self.*

If your practice is based on your own ideas and unquestioned assumptions about what the mind is and what realisation is, you are only strengthening the roots of birth and death. The "Original Self" is the true human being, being what humans truly are: the display of inherent and perfect luminosity. Outside of this Open Luminosity, what is there that can even be grasped at? This is "*nothing holy*" and "*don't know*". It is an iron hammerhead without a hole for a handle. It is a great ball of flame.

*Zhaozhou<sup>20</sup> asked Nanquan,<sup>21</sup> "What is the Way?"*

*Nanquan said, "Ordinary Mind is the Way."*

*Zhaozhou said, "Well, should I move along with it or not?"*

*Nanquan said, "Once you try to move forward, you have already gone astray."*

*Zhaozhou said, "If I don't try anything, how can I know the Way?"*

*Nanquan said, "The Way is not a matter of knowing something or not knowing something. Knowing something is delusion. Knowing nothing is a blank state.*

*Arriving at the Way beyond doubt, it is vast and boundless as space. What can be grasped or avoided?"<sup>22</sup>*

This is why the ancient masters out of compassion for those who fabricate practice through their own efforts carefully guided them with saying things like: "*The Way is not a matter of thinking or of not-thinking. It cannot be attained through words or silence. As soon as you hesitate, you are ten million stages away.*"

Monks, do not all of the strategies of cultivating something or of mystical principles or subtle states all fall within either thinking or not-thinking? Since it is not a matter of thinking or not-thinking, right now, abandon deluded views of attaining or rejecting.

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<sup>20</sup> Zhaozhou Congshen (Chao-chou T'sung-shen; Joshu Jushin), 778-897. He appears in Pi-en-lu (Hekiganroku) 2, 9, 30, 41, 45, 52, 57, 58, 59, 64, 80, and 96; Records of Silence 9, 10, 18, 39, 47, 57, 63; Gateless Gate 1, 7, 11, 14, 19, 31, and 37.

<sup>21</sup> Nanquan Puyan Nan-chu'uan P'u-yuan; Nansen Fugan), 748-835. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 28, 31, 40, 63, 64, 69; Records of Silence 9, 10, 16, 23, 69, 79, 91, 93; Gateless Gate 14, 19, 27, 34.

<sup>22</sup> Gateless Gate, case 19.

The ordinary folk who have no understanding or exertion do not understand even this and grasp at the illusions of a self and rush about vainly in the world of dreams, possessed by demons of conventional views and cleverness. Trying to figure it out, they conceive of luminosity as something like a fireball erupting from between the Buddha's brows. Taking words at surface value, they never even imagine investigating the real meaning of the sages. Although they might dress up as seasoned veterans of practice, they do not understand advanced practice and so do not understand that the luminosity of this whole body is the luminosity of the Total Field, pervading the skies and covering the ground. Fools who cling to obvious [apparent] forms, they are almost beneath contempt.

Shakyamuni said,

*The supreme light is not blue, gold, red, green, white, or black. It is not an object, it is not the mind. It is neither existent nor non-existent. It does not arise from conditions. It is the source of all the Buddhas, the essence of opening to Openness, the essence of the Buddha Way.*

Emerging from the Harmony of Blossoming Luminosity, seated on a diamond throne of numberless lights, the Buddha presented this single practice.

Luminosity is "*not blue, gold, red, green, white or black*". It is the god of fire, scarlet through and through. It is a mud ox playing on the bottom of the sea. It is the iron ox, without skin or bones. Since it is not an object, not the mind, what is there to seek for, panting and heaving, your chest thickened with desire?" *It does not arise from conditions*, so how could you think that you could fabricate it?

This is truly the source of all the Buddhas, the essence of the Way of Awake Awareness. This luminosity is the single practice practised and maintained by Vairochana Buddha from the moment he set forth on the Way. This is the ground of all experiences, beyond all categories and descriptions. This is known as the single practice of the luminosity of the ground of mind.

Shakyamuni Buddha said,

*If those who present this Teaching dwell alone in seclusion, in utter silence beyond the speech of people, and read and recite this sutra, I will manifest for them the body of clear radiance. When they forget a section or verse, I will remind them of it so that they will understand it completely.*

Reading and reciting this sutra is the manifestation of clear radiance. The body and mind of all the Buddhas is luminosity. The Field of Dipamkara is Eternal Silent Radiance. Fields of Awakening, bodies and minds are all luminosity. And so we say that there are eighty-four thousand luminosities, numberless luminosities.

Zen Master Puning Yong<sup>23</sup> brought up the koan of the fire presenting the Teaching and added this verse for the assembly:

*A ball of fierce flames reddens the vast sky  
and the Buddhas of the three times are at its centre.  
Having presented it, they are finished now.  
A cool breeze moves above the brows.*

In uncovering the essence of the Way of Awake Awareness and entering the room, this kind of vision of flames presenting the Teachings might happen. But there is a single ball of fierce flames, which has always burned throughout all time. Coming from nowhere, it is formless and without fragments and goes nowhere. Unfragmented, it is the landscape of the primordial ground of all that is, all Buddhas, all beings.

Why do monks of today not understand this or even trust it? Without confidence in this, they fall into the endless circuit of conditioned experiences and lower births. If they can understand the cause of this, they should just *look* and penetrate it thoroughly.

Those who follow conventional views believe that what is illusory is real, what is transient is permanent, and so they are concerned only with gain and loss and coarse profit. Their lives are like candles in the wind and yet they place their trust in what is uncertain even for tomorrow. Breathing out does not mean that you will necessarily breathe in again. And so they are filled with glee and despair at momentary changes.

The elements of the body will evaporate like dew, will vanish in the flames of the cremation pyre. There is not a single particle of it that you can hold on to. And yet you loll about, as if you were the master of yourself. This is not a matter of Buddhist teachings. It is obviously so and you can see it with your own eyes.

The Buddhas of the three times are in this great ball of flames and all beings are in it too. What difference is there between Buddhas and sentient beings? Those in it who grasp at the deluded assumptions of a self cause themselves to drown in the torrent

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<sup>23</sup> Unknown.

of birth and death. Those in it who see right through to luminosity realise unobstructed all-pervasive knowing.

Yongjia <sup>24</sup> said,

*It is without boundaries, like space.*

*It is wherever you stand.*

*It is free of struggle and searching.*

*It cannot be held or released.*

*Give up the search.*

*It is here.*<sup>25</sup>

Nagarjuna said,

*Perfect wisdom is like a great ball of flames, ungraspable from all sides.*<sup>26</sup>

In hearing and reading these famous teachings everybody studies them as if they were intended for someone else. You do not abandon yourself into Totality or yield into freedom and ease. Instead you mutter that you are missing some essential trick or skill, or that you are just a beginner, or that you've started to practise too late in life. And so you remain ordinary people who have not shed a single deluded view. You do not abandon your assumptions of self-image. Although you dwell always in the Great Treasury of Luminosity, you sell yourself out for hard labour, wander in misery, always poor. Although born into wealth and ease, through your own views of poverty, you turn the body of clear radiance into a carrier of buckets of night soil, a shit hole cleaner.<sup>27</sup> The view of a self should just be let go right now.

Although you might be able to discuss the divisions of the sutras and commentaries, the provisional and true levels of the Teachings, the exoteric and tantric principles, and the subtleties of the five houses and seven schools of Zen, all of this is just spinning about in birth and death if you do so from the vantage of a self. This is why it is said that understanding reality with the mind of birth and death bends reality into the shape of birth and death.

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<sup>24</sup> Yongjia (Yung-chia; Yoka), 665-713. A Tiantai master who late in life received transmission from the Sixth Ancestor Huineng.

<sup>25</sup> Shodoka: The Song of Freedom by Yoka Daishi, translated by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi, WWZC Archives 1987, 1994.

<sup>26</sup> In the Mula Madhyamika-karika.

<sup>27</sup> References to a parable in the Lotus Discourse.

The views of a knower, of a person, an entity, something that lives are all self-image. The view that there is a body, and the fixations and delusions about materiality are all self-image. All of the subtle stages of practice up to Awakening as Wonder<sup>28</sup> all arise from self-image. The view of self, the momentum of tendencies, traces of enlightenment, and viewing practice as tranquillisation are all greater or lesser infections of self-image. From the most perverted and dense contractions to the last veil of subtle ignorance, all derive from self-image. Without it there would be no need for a Buddha or the Teachings. Thus Zen Master Dogen said, "*Let go of the view of a self through understanding impermanence.*" These are direct instructions from great compassion and lead to true sincerity.

In The Teaching on Pacifying Mind, Great Master Bodhidharma of Shaolin says,

*Why is it that worldly ones fail to realise Awakening despite all of their efforts? They do not realise Awakening because of self-concern. Mature practitioners do not fret over troubles or become gleeful when things go well because they are not driven by self-concern.*

A verse by an old Buddha says,

*Buddhas do not see themselves as Buddhas  
because perfect knowing is Buddha.  
If you realise this, there is no other Buddha.  
Sages know that there are no obstructions  
within equanimity  
and have no fear of birth and death.*

Having no fear of birth and death means having no view of self. Having no view of self means being free of self-obsession, free of self-image. The luminosity of vast and perfect knowing is beyond persons and so the verse says that only perfect knowing is Buddha.

In spite of this you grasp at this body which is like dew on the grass, like a bubble. And yet when it comes to luminosity, your true body, you think it doesn't concern you or you look for some special thing. And so you spend your time in trivialities like personal conflicts or trying to stir up donations instead of clearly looking into where this vain life will end and using that recognition to spur on your practice.

Practise and realise this Treasury of Luminosity and it will no longer be a matter of just your own practice. You have four debts: to parents, to people, to all beings, and

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<sup>28</sup> The fifty-two stages of the Kegon school, based on the Flower Garland Discourse.

to the Three Treasures. The three realms of grasping, pure form, and nothingness, mountains and rivers, the great earth, your body and the bodies of all beings arise within the Suchness of luminosity which pervades everywhere and all times.

Great Master Caoshan <sup>29</sup> has a verse:

*Essential Awareness is round and bright,  
a formless form.*

*Do not separate yourself from it  
with knowledge or views.*

*The myriad thoughts obscure the subtle;  
the wandering mind loses the Path.*

*Feelings about the numberless things  
Objectify and block.*

*Attention following multiplicity  
loses the primordially real.*

*Understand these words  
and you will be free of all struggle  
as you always already were.*

These teachings arise from within the Treasury of Luminosity and provide instruction on the subtle practice of realisation. Monks or laypeople, seasoned practitioners or beginners, clever or stupid, all must understand and practise this formless form of primordial Awareness, round and bright, peerless and without another to compare it to.

Primordial Awareness is Buddha Nature. Round and bright, it is the vast luminosity, formlessly and serenely shining as the illusion of your present body. Thus an ancient said, "*The whole body is formless, the whole world does not obscure it.*"

If you still don't understand, how about this. Smashing the total body to nothing, incinerating skin, flesh, bones, and marrow, bring me one thing. At such a moment, all beings, the Buddhas of past and present, ordinary folk and sages throughout the three worlds, the numberless forms, are all only this formless form.

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<sup>29</sup> Caoshan Benyi (Ts'ao-shan Pen-yi; Sozan Honjaku), 840-901. He appears in the Records of Silence 73, 98; Gateless Gate 10. Major Dharma-brother of Yunju Daoying.

Master Linji <sup>30</sup> said,

*The elements of earth, air, water, and fire cannot present the Teachings or hear them. The spleen, gut, liver, and gallbladder cannot present the Teachings or hear them. Space cannot present the Teachings or hear them. So what is it that can present the Teachings and hear them?*

The formless form of luminosity presents and hears the Teaching. For the sake of others, the ancients provisionally called it "*the wandering monk hearing the truth.*"

"*Essential Awareness is round and bright, a formless form*", explains everything in a single line. Yet out of compassion Master Caoshan elaborates further on subtle practice saying, "*Do not separate yourself from it with knowledge or views.*" Those who are studying under deluded teachers only learn ways to feel about things, and opinions; and wind up feeling that their own study has revealed a Zen beyond the Buddhas and Awakened Ancestors, beyond the understanding and perception of anyone to question their actions. Believing that one has realised what one hasn't is being possessed by the demons of delusion.

Those obsessed with their own personalities tire easily and advance no further, claiming they are incapable. They would rather cling to opinions than study and learn.

The two extremes of grasping and aversion are the basis of choosing and rejection, of feelings and thoughts. Thus Caoshan severs these with a single cut, "*The myriad thoughts obscure the subtle; the wandering mind loses the Path*". And so we must abandon false teachings and teachers to follow friends of virtue because false teachers only deepen our opinions and views with their own.

The "*Path*" and the "*subtle*" are the Sun Face and Moon Face of luminosity, primordial Awareness. And yet when within this luminosity a single stance is assumed, the mind wanders into fabrication [invention]. These drifting clouds obscure the bright round moon of Awareness and we "*lose the Path.*"

"*Feelings about the numberless things objectify and block*". The Buddha has said, "*Mind, Buddha, and living beings are not three different things.*" He also said, "*There is only one truth.*" Even though you encounter such teachings, you still fall into delusions about self and other, noble and common, sacred and profane. Viewing objects laid out before you, you consider forms and sounds as poverty and wealth,

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<sup>30</sup> Lingji Yixuan (Lin-chi I-hsuan; Rinzai Gigen), d. 867. He appears in Blue Cliff Records 20, 32; Records of Silence 13, 38, 80, 86, 95.

loss and gain. And by holding on to these views, your practice is infected by hope and fear.

*"Attention following multiplicity loses the primordially real."*

The Buddha Dharma has manifested countless aspects to work with the countless delusions of beings. Thus there are teachings great and small, provisional and true, half and full, partial and complete, exoteric and tantric, practices and doctrines, the Path of sages and the Path of the Pure Land. It is not that there are not many aspects to the Teachings but that if you do not understand the primordially real you wind up with only a multiplicity of views.

*"Understand these words and you will be free of all struggle as you always already were."*

The way you always already were means to practise without attempting to fabricate some kind of realisation. Just sit still as formless form, without hesitation. If you adopt any stance of attention you are not *"free of all struggle as you always already were."*

Shakyamuni Buddha said, *"There is nothing I have gained from Dipamkara Buddha to realise complete and utter perfect Awakening"*. In this saying we meet Dipamkara Buddha. These words say what numberless words cannot say. Practise the *"nothing gained"* of luminosity.

Monks of the present day who shave their heads and wear black robes, following the ways of the Buddha, live their days and months in the radiance that shines from the lamp of Dipamkara. Yet they never question what Dipamkara Buddha, what this lamp, really is and so are not true monks. Just decked out like those who have left home, they spend their time scrabbling for donations like beggars and thieves.

If you say that you are not like this, then tell me: What are the major and minor marks of Dipamkara Buddha? You might have nothing to say but you can't say nothing, so right now: Say it! Say it!

It is regrettable that people think of Dipamkara only as a Buddha of the past and do not realise that Dipamkara Buddha's luminosity shines throughout the past, present, and future. So how could you know then that this luminosity is presenting the Path and realising release right now in your nostrils and eyes?

The worst kind of students are just weary of birth and death and want to move on to something else, some kind of nirvana, and their practice is based on trying to attain

some thing. Already bloated with self-image they turn practice into a kind of greed and their neediness goes on until they die. Teachers with no discernment praise this lot as diligent and faithful practitioners and this reinforces their self-obsession until they are reborn as hungry ghosts.

From the very beginning, seeking concentration states and viewing practice and realisation as two different things is different from the realised-practice of the harmonies and vast activity of the Transmission of luminosity.

Master Baizhang <sup>31</sup> said,

*The luminosity of mind shines alone, unentangled by sensory objectifications. Real and unchanging, the essential manifests beyond the written teachings as the stainless nature of Awareness, perfect and originally complete. Just abandon objectification and it awakens into Suchness.*

The luminosity of Awareness shines without ceasing from the beginningless past through the endless future. This is vast activity." *Unentangled by sensory objectification, real and unchanging, the essential manifests.*" This is the practice of alignment with radiance. Just aligning with the Luminosity of Awareness, dwelling at ease in it, is the supreme *samadhi* of *shikantaza*, just sitting.

As soon as you claim that you have attained anything then there is the matter of how much or how little, how deep or how shallow. Clinging to appearances as things, you wind up turning practice into a mere husk, seek for the Buddha as something somewhere, use words and language to determine true and false. Grasping at appearances, your practice of the perfection [*paramita*]of generosity is understood as a means to acquire merit. Attempting to purify delusions and manufacture virtues you struggle in mind and body and congratulate yourself on your diligence. So what have you attained?

Putting aside brush and ink, avoiding others, and sitting alone in an empty valley, eating bark and fruit, dressed in hemp robes, sitting ceaselessly without lying down... If you are doing this to try to stop the mind and return to some motionless condition, to try to cut away your confusion and dwell in some absolute truth, to avoid samsaric conditions and attain nirvanic ones, then this is just hope and fear arising from grasping.

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<sup>31</sup> Baizhang Huaihai (Pai-chang Huai-hai; Hyakujo Ekai), 720-814. He appears in The Blue Cliff Records 26, 53, 70, 71, 72; Gateless Gate 2, 40; Records of Silence 8; Transmission of Reality 18.

So Yongjia said,

*Don't grasp at 'voidness' and ignore cause and effect;  
such reckless confusion leads only to suffering.*

*Rejecting the truth and grasping at entities is also a mistake;  
it's like jumping into a fire to avoid drowning.*

*To reject delusion and grasp at the truth  
suits perfectly the mind of like and dislike.*

*Students who practise this way,  
it's like mistaking a thief as your own son.*

*Ignoring the treasure of Reality and losing the merit to Awaken self and  
others  
is due to the eighth, seventh and sixth consciousnesses.*

Monks, just throw the body-mind into the Treasury of Luminosity, release the whole body into the ease of the luminosity of the Awakened Ones; and sit, walk, stand, and lie down inhering within it.

This is why the Buddha said, "*The children of the Awakened Ones should just abide in this stage, the experiencing of Awakening, and inhere within it, walking, sitting, lying down.*" These golden words should always be remembered by those who aspire to be children of the Awakened Ones. "*This stage*" means the Treasury of Luminosity, the Single Path of Awake Awareness. Do not allow a single arising thought to stray from this and follow objectification, or the experience of Awake Awareness is transformed into the animal realm of torpid fixation or the realm of hungry ghosts of craving.

Now, about the major and minor marks and the place of realisation of Dipamkara Buddha, of Shakyamuni, of the seven Buddhas<sup>32</sup> of this aeon and the successive generations of Awakened Ancestors who have transmitted the lamp of luminosity. Do you consider them to be far from you in time and place? Or do you realise them to be right here and throughout all times? Don't you know anything about the jewelled stupa of serene radiance?<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Vipashyin Buddha, Sikhin Buddha, Vishvabhu Buddha, Krakucchandu Buddha, Kanakamuni Buddha, Kashyapa Buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha.

<sup>33</sup> In a crucial passage of the Lotus Discourse, Chapter 11, a jewelled stupa appears in space.

You might understand that "*the reality of Awake Awareness is open space*", but if you just hold on to this statement and do not penetrate past the cave of intellectual understandings and metaphors then how can you become an Ancestor in this transmission of the luminosity of Awake Awareness? This is just the howling of jackals, tearing at the body of a fallen lion.

If you do not see it through your own eyes then, although you shave your heads and wrap yourselves in black robes, you are just miserable deluded beings. Although you might be able to expound on a thousand sutras and ten thousand classical commentaries you are just counting another's treasures. You are like sailors who know there's something of value aboard but do not know its price.

Tell me, right now: this shitting and pissing, getting dressed and eating...who is it that does this? And what about the sounds of rivers, the colours of the mountains, the coming and going of heat and cold, blossoms in spring, the bright moon in autumn, the thousand changes and numberless appearances? What is it that does this? Truly, this is "*a wondrous face, its light illuminating the ten directions.*" It is, "*bondage and liberation are like last night's faded dream.*" It is "*form is emptiness, emptiness is form.*"

If you don't know this then you can say it is "*sitting alone on this great, sublime peak*",<sup>34</sup> but this is a lie, it is a corrupted teaching. You might hear about "*the silent luminosity that pervades all times but never comes and goes*", but it will just be babbling without any meaning.

In speaking of the practice of the Single Path, the Buddha taught,

*Those who grasp at a self and cling to appearances cannot understand my teaching. Those who cultivate practices to elude life are barren fields. To cultivate the seeds of Awakening to the luminosity that illuminates all worlds you should investigate the truth of all things. They are unborn and ceaseless; are not permanent and yet indestructible; are not one thing and yet not different; do not come and go. Whether on the path of learning or having gone beyond learning, do not contrive fragmented views.*

This ancient teaching of the luminosity that illumines all worlds should be engraved on your bones, right through to the marrow. This is the subtle form of the vast activity that manifests the Buddhas of the three times. If you yourself should practise this, you could unfold joy for all beings.

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<sup>34</sup> The Blue Cliff Records and The Transmission of Reality (Himitsu Shobogenzo) case 18.

However, looking around at monks these days, because they base everything on their own narrow views although they polish it day and night, they are just trying to rub through to get to something. Others try to swat away wandering thoughts, hoping to clear things up by beating out the flames, so that some mysteriously silent light will shine. If you think it is just a matter of stopping thoughts, then don't wood, stones, and mud already do it better than you can? This is really the worst kind of student to have because they "*drown themselves to avoid getting burned.*" Idiots! If you grasp at the practices of the two vehicles, those with only a hearsay knowledge of the Path<sup>35</sup> and those who self-fabricate enlightenment experiences,<sup>36</sup> and the tendencies of ordinary people to 'realise' some supreme and magnificent enlightenment - you are just fooling yourselves.

So it is said,<sup>37</sup>

*Those who practise according to those two vehicles might be diligent, but they do not have the aspiration to actualise the Way. Those who live outside of what is real might be clever but they don't understand anything. Deluded and foolish, petty and cringing, they still look for something when I hold out my open hand.*

To cultivate the mind or look for the mind like this is just being obstructed by trying to figure it out and thus obscures the primordial perfection of luminosity. It rejects the Buddha's own teachings and creates the causes for falling into the Avici hell of dense contraction.

Countless abbots and teachers from the Tang dynasty up until now have been swindling and fooling the masses with their defective views, encouraging greed and poverty-based seeking. Isn't this regrettable? I find it depressing. Even now, they wander about in their ghost caves, their thieving little minds always scheming.

Some of these people have wrongly interpreted a sudden shift in *ki* and certify it as Awakening. Or else someone might get up some inspiration to sit ceaselessly without ever lying down, just wearing themselves out so that they lose all interest in anything and the activities of body-mind congeal into a dullness that is then wildly interpreted as being the single radiance which has no inside or out, the primordial ground, the only true condition. Taking this experience to a dim-eyed teacher and presenting it before them, these teachers cannot perceive it for what it is. Just agreeing with them, they certify them as Zen Masters and senior practitioners.

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<sup>35</sup> Sravakas.

<sup>36</sup> Pratyekabuddhas.

<sup>37</sup> In the Lotus Discourse.

Numberless practitioners of the Way who have shallow minds and little understanding have fallen into this poison. Although we say that it is the Dark Age, the End Time for Dharma, it's still depressing.

I sincerely offer these words of advice to those who wish to truly practise: <sup>38</sup>

Do not be pulled around by states of mind or objects. Do not rely on intellectual knowledge. Don't show in your hands what you receive on your seat in the Monks' Hall. Just throw body and mind into the Great Treasury of Luminosity and don't look back.

Don't try to fabricate "enlightenment" or hide from "delusion". Don't push away the arising of thoughts or crave them; don't identify. Stably, calmly, practice *shikantaza*, just sitting.

If you do not propagate thoughts, they will not continue themselves. Just breathing in. Just breathing out. Just so. Sitting under the open sky, weightless as a flame. Even if eighty-four thousand thoughts come and go, each will display itself as the luminosity of perfect knowing itself if you do not hold on to them and allow them to just go on their own way.

This display of luminosity must not just be something you experience in sitting, but in every step. This step, this step, are all the walking of luminosity. All through the day, be dead to personal views or fragmented thoughts.

Breathing in, breathing out, hearing, touching, without thoughts of separation, is just the silent illumination <sup>39</sup> of luminosity in which body and mind are one. Thus, when someone calls, you immediately answer.

In this luminosity ordinary people and sages, deluded and enlightened, are one. In the midst of impermanence, this luminosity is unobstructed. Forests, flowers, grasses, leaves; humans and animals; large or small, long or short, square or round: all display themselves simultaneously, free of discriminating thoughts or intention. This is luminosity unobstructed in impermanence. Luminosity is its own open brilliance; it does not depend on your mind.

Luminosity has no location. When Buddhas appear in this universe, it does not arise with them. When Buddhas cease, luminosity does not cease. When you are

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<sup>38</sup> The remaining section of the text is the subject of a commentary by Philippe Coupey in his book *The Song of the Wind in the Dry Tree*, Hohm Press (2014).

<sup>39</sup> 无声照明 Ch. *Mozhou*, Jp. *Mokushyo*.

born, luminosity is not born; when you die, luminosity does not die. Buddhas do not have more of it; sentient beings do not have less. If you are deluded, *it* is not; if you are enlightened, *it* is not. It has no rank, no form, and no name. This is the Body of Totality of all things.

You cannot grasp it; you cannot throw it away. It is unattainable. Although it is unattainable, it penetrates this whole body. From the highest heaven to the deepest hell, all realms are illuminated perfectly. This is wondrous and inconceivably subtle luminosity.

If you trust, and open [yourself] to the meaning of these words, you won't need to ask anyone what is right or wrong. You will intimately realise reality as if you'd come face to face with your grandfather in the village. Don't practise in order to receive a certification paper from your teacher or predictions about when you will become a Buddha. Even less so, should you be attached to clothes, food or home. Don't give in to attachment or lustful cravings.

From the beginningless beginning, this *samadhi* is the seat of Awakening, the Ocean of Awake Awareness.<sup>40</sup> This zazen is the Buddha's own practice, the sitting as Awake Awareness which is transmitted from Buddha to Buddha. You are a child of the Awakened Ones, so sit calmly in his own seat. Don't sit like a hell dweller, a hungry ghost or animal, a human being or jealous beings, or shining beings, those with only hearsay knowledge or those who fabricate enlightenment experiences.

Just practise this just sitting of *shikantaza*. Do not waste time. This is the practice place of Ordinary Mind. This is the complete practice of the Treasury of Luminosity. This is inconceivable freedom.

This essay should not be shown about, but is only for those of our Lineage who have "*entered the master's room*." My only concern is that, whether in one's own practice or in instructing others, there should be no false or incomplete views.

*Written at Eihei-ji in the reign of Guta, August 28, 1278*

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<sup>40</sup> Possibly a glancing reference to: *Shobogenzo, Kai'in Zanmai* (Ocean Mudra Samadhi) by Eihei Dogen with which - as the editor of the *Shobogenzo* - Ejo would certainly have been familiar.

For Your Own Notes

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