

## Notes on Some of the Ways Scripture Appears in Daily Life

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I first met the words of Fukanzazengi or Rules for Meditation while reading them aloud, along with other people, all of whom were strangers, the first Saturday afternoon of my first retreat at Shasta Abbey. Meditation halls, monks with shaven heads, Buddha statues that seem to have a twinkle in their eyes: all was new to me (at 19 years of age). Most unusual were the words coming out of my mouth. Or, actually, the concepts. It was 1972 and there were plenty of aphorisms around, about letting the sunshine in, etc. But those were lullabies in comparison to the surprise questions, statements and practicalities that mixed together in the Rules for Meditation, then called Zazen Rules. Between being stunned and being self-conscious, hearing the words or concepts for the first time as I spoke them, I didn't have time to decide if I knew what they meant. This was the beginning of a multifaceted relationship of unfolding recognition; sometimes instantly penetrating, sometimes slow-dawning, sometimes evolving. Something true could actually become truer.

The first question flew by. *"Why are training and enlightenment differentiated since the Truth is Universal?"* What? If Buddha Nature is everywhere and all are already enlightened, why do we train? *"The separation would be as that between heaven and earth if even the slightest gap existed."* What does that separation look like? My daily life brought me an answer, as I received my various karmic comeuppances: life without training is hell. To not receive the Truth through the senses, to block it via my greed, hate, and delusion, would be to live at some level more or less intense of hell. The 2x4 school. (Also known as school of hard knocks).

An acquaintance of mine expressed it as: "I've seen a thousand lives, and worlds drifting apart and coming together, all at once. I don't need to schedule or try to make myself meditate. All I have to do is wait and sooner or later things get so bad I have to meditate." Each time I hit bottom though, and sometimes before, another odd statement served to help: *"When the opposites arise, the Buddha Mind is lost."*

This was a phrase that served as a key, from the beginning. I never knew how I understood it, it just acted as a key, like a key turning in a lock, the result of which was to let go. In an obvious mess of greed, I would remember: When the opposites arise, the Buddha Mind is lost. Didn't get what I wanted? Friends underestimating me? When the opposites arise, the Buddha Mind is lost. At the bottom of all suffering moments it was possible to recognize the opposites, and let go of them.

Another way of phrasing this was the way I remembered an Impromptu Poem of Bankei's:

Good is stupid, bad is stupid, and stupid is stupid, too.

Over time, statements that started out as true, such as “Do not travel to other dusty countries, thus forsaking your own seat,” turned out to be also true in a deeper way, yet another way or level. The quality of a truth can deepen. When I first heard it I was actually travelling a lot and even when we weren't travelling we were often going out to this event or that, not knowing quite what we were looking for. So the saying gave some comfort at that level. It made sense that you don't have to go collecting events, “fun”, etc, when you can enjoy the lawful gateway to carefree peace, any time. Many years later, as a monk, the statement came back to me again, with the emphasis on forsaking your own seat: At the monastery, when the monks sit facing a wall in the morning, that the Abbess, or representative of the Buddha, circles the hall, going by each monk. As she goes by, barely visible out of the corner of your eye, it is symbolic of the Teaching being offered, and each monk, expressing the wish to learn, raises their hands in *gasshō*. One morning as I sat there, looking like I was meditating, mentally I was off sorting out some problem to be dealt with. I didn't notice her passing until she had already gone by. Of course no one scolded me for not making *gasshō*, but it struck me: the Buddha was here, and I was so busy puzzling that the moment escaped me. What a shame! It reminds me of that cartoon I saw some years ago, where the character is saying, “I had a near-death experience. My whole life passed before me, and I wasn't there for any of it!”

The recitation of the Rules for Meditation happens nearly every day at the monastery. A person can be lulled into thinking that it is ordinary, just instructions to sit upright, put your hands like this, and so on. Unwittingly treating it as if it is just ordinary, not that important, can mean that, day by day, it works its way into the weave of training. A trainee might relax with it, thinking nothing in particular, and then be surprised with meaning. For example, I can't remember ever asking “What the heck is a Buddha Seal, anyway?!” I remember initially wondering if it was actually a secret sacred item of some sort. Day after day I said the words as if I might know what they mean. After some decades I turned toward this saying and thought about it. How could it be “preserved by both the Buddhas in the present world and those in the world of the Indian and Chinese ancestors”? Beyond time? And “thus spreading the Truth”? It must be something intangible.

A seal, an imprint of authenticity. Mudras, flows or positions expressing aspects of meditation, are referred to as seals. And there are the seals of Buddhism, *anicca anatta dukkha*. I saw a card with an image that struck me, the image of a Buddha's smiling face, but just above the eyebrows it faded and blended with the image of an ocean. At some point I learned that there is a *samadhi* called the ocean imprint *samadhi*, an ongoing meditation, sometimes called a waveless sea, of Buddha Nature, and I heard someone read a few phrases of a poem that included the words from the Buddhist tradition, I did not hear where, only that this was part of the definition of the *samadhi* called ocean imprint:

The imprint of the heart floats in space  
untarnished, the moonlight shines  
without beginning without end without past without future....

So currently, for now, putting all that together, my guess is that the Buddha Seal is enlightenment.

One of the wonderful aspects of the flow of Truth is that there is always more. Clarity can deepen. The Treasure House can open naturally and we can enjoy it fully and yet there is still more. A flashlight of logic can be helpful and then again it is completely outshined by the light of the Dharma that unfolds from within. Pure being is already here for us. We can't hurry it up.

I will conclude with these words from a Dharma talk of R.M. Daizui in 2000:

In the end, there is really no difference between life and practice, so be thorough. Let the training be the life and let your life be training. And above all I say this to encourage you to keep going, simply and honestly, doing the best training you know how at this moment. To do that will lead to everything else; moment by moment, day by day, year by year.