

Verses on the Faith Mind

Sosan, 3rd Zen Patriarch

*The Great Way is not difficult
for those who have no preferences.
When love and hate are both absent
everything becomes clear and undisguised.*

*Make the smallest distinction,
however, and heaven and earth are
set infinitely apart.*

*If you wish to see the truth then
hold no opinions for or against anything.*

*To set up what you like against
what you dislike is the disease of the mind.*

*When the deep meaning of things
is not understood
the mind's essential peace is
disturbed to no avail.*

*The Way is perfect like vast space
where nothing is lacking and nothing
is in excess.*

*Indeed, it is due to our choosing
to accept or reject that we do not
see the true nature of things.*

*Live neither in the entanglements
of outer things,
nor in inner feelings of emptiness.
Be serene in the oneness of things*

and such erroneous views will disappear by themselves.

When you try to stop activity to achieve passivity your very effort fills you with activity.

As long as you remain in one extreme or the other you will never know Oneness.

Those who do not live in the single way fail in both activity and passivity, assertion and denial.

To deny the reality of things is to miss their reality;
to assert the emptiness of things is to miss their reality.

The more you talk and think about it, the further astray you wander from the truth.

Stop talking and thinking, and there is nothing you will not be able to know.

To return to the root is to find the meaning, but to pursue appearances is to miss the source.

At the moment of inner enlightenment there is a going beyond appearance and emptiness.

The changes that appear to occur

*in the empty world we call real
because of our ignorance.*

*Do not search for the truth;
only cease to cherish opinions.*

*Do not remain in the dualistic
state; avoid such pursuits carefully.*

*If there is even a trace of this and
that, of right and wrong, the Mind-
essence will be lost in confusion.*

*Although all dualities come from
the One, do not be attached even
to this One.*

*When the mind exists undisturbed
in the Way, nothing in the world
can offend,*

*and when a thing can no longer offend,
it ceases to exist in the old way.*

*When no discriminating thoughts
arise, the old mind ceases to exist.*

*When thought objects vanish,
the thinking-subject vanishes,
as when the mind vanishes,
objects vanish.*

*Things are objects because of the
subject (mind);
the mind (subject) is such because
of things (object).*

Understand the relativity of these
two and the basic reality:
the unity of emptiness.

In this Emptiness the two are
indistinguishable and each contains
in itself the whole world.

If you do not discriminate between
coarse and fine you will not be
tempted to prejudice and opinion.

To live in the Great Way
is neither easy nor difficult,
but those with limited views
are fearful and irresolute:
the faster they hurry, the slower
they go,
and clinging (attachment) cannot
be limited;
even to be attached to the idea
of enlightenment is to go astray.
Just let things be in their own
way, and there will be neither
coming nor going.

Obey the nature of things
(your own nature), and you will walk
freely and undisturbed.
When thought is in bondage the
truth is hidden,

for everything is murky and unclear,
and the burdensome practice of
judging brings annoyance and
weariness.

What benefit can be derived from
distinctions and separations?

If you wish to move in the
One Way do not dislike even the
world of senses and ideas.

Indeed, to accept them fully is
identical with true Enlightenment.

The wise man strives to no goals
but the foolish man fetters himself.

There is one Dharma, not many;
distinctions arise from the clinging
needs of the ignorant.

To seek Mind with the (discriminating)
mind is the greatest of all mistakes.

Rest and unrest derive from illusion;
with enlightenment there is no
liking and disliking.

All dualities come from ignorant
inference.

They are like dreams or flowers in air:
foolish to try to grasp them.

Gain and loss, right and wrong;
such thoughts must finally be

abolished at once.

If the eye never sleeps,
all dreams will naturally cease.
If the mind makes no discriminations,
the ten thousand things are as
they are, of single essence.
To understand the mystery of this
One-essence is to be released
from all entanglements.
When all things are seen equally
the timeless Self-essence is reached.
No comparisons or analogies are
possible in this causeless,
relationless state.

Consider movement stationary
and the stationary in motion,
both movement and rest disappear.
When such dualities cease to exist
Oneness itself cannot exist.
To this ultimate finality
no law or description applies.

For the unified mind in
accord with the Way
all self-centered striving ceases.
Doubts and irresolutions vanish
and life in true faith is possible.

With a single stroke we are
freed from bondage;
nothing clings to us and we hold
to nothing.

All is empty, clear, self-illumi-
nating, with no exertion of the
mind's power.

Here thought, feeling, knowledge,
and imagination are of no value,
In this world of Suchness
there is neither self nor
other-than-self.

To come directly into harmony
with this reality just simply say
when doubts arise, "Not two".

In this "not two" nothing is
separate, nothing is excluded.

No matter when or where,
enlightenment means entering
the truth.

And this truth is beyond extension
or diminution in time or space;
in it a single thought is
ten thousand years.

Emptiness here, Emptiness there,
but the infinite universe stands
always before your eyes.

Infinitely large and infinitely small

no difference, for definitions have
vanished and no boundaries are seen.
So too with Being and non-Being.
Don't waste time in doubts
and arguments that have nothing
to do with this.

One thing, all things:
move among and intermingle,
without distinction.
To live in this realization is to be
without anxiety about non-perfection.
To live in this faith is the road
to non-duality,
because the non-dual is one
with the trusting mind.
Words!
The Way is beyond language,
for in it there is
no yesterday
no tomorrow
no today.

Gate Gate Paragate Parasamgate Bodhi Svaha

Gone gone, Gone beyond, Gone beyond the beyond
to the Awakened, At once!

On Faithmind

A Dharma Talk by Pat Enkyo O'Hara as spoken on October 24, 1997

A very old verse treasured by Zen Buddhists is the verse of the Faith Mind. It's a classic, and in a way, very Taoist description of the balanced state of mind, the state of Shikan. Some of you consider that you do shikantaza, and I encourage you to practice that. It's a practice that requires a lot of concentration; it's not just sitting down and mulling over your life by any means. It's learning to allow each and every thought to drop away until you're just in that beautiful, wonderful space of the moment. And when you're in that space there's no judging yourself or others, everything's just fine just there whatever it is. And even if you are dying, and in a way we are all dying, when you're in that space it's okay that's just where it is right then.

It's very hard for us to think of that when we're all clinging and shot through with our attachments to our desires and our attachments to our aversions. That space where there's no separation: every time I try to say it, it sounds mystical or something but it's (here Enkyo gives a single hand clap and raises her voice) JUST THERE, COMPLETELY THERE. It is wonderful because it so incredibly free.

But that's all there is. And any time you try to use a metaphor or anything you lose it but it's that (she snaps her fingers) moment. And how do we do that? The way we sit, our posture, and practice: we get better at what we do. So we can get better at being very concerned about our life. We can get better at being very discontented. Or we can get better at letting go. And that's a choice we make moment by moment in our meditation practice. And that's a choice we make moment by moment in our life.

We've all experienced some form of flow, some moment when we're painting, or we're writing, biking or swimming, or making

love or something, where there's a complete moment of flow before there's a judgment, before something comes back and constricts it all. Or decides that, "oh this is the most wonderful thing in the world," and builds a kind of whole superstructure around that experience which is now gone because now what the experience has turned into is building this description of this wonderful event rather than the thing that is happening itself.

We've all had moments of flow. It's very much the same thing we're talking about a moment when you're just present. So use your hara, use that area right below your navel, it's a very important area for you. And when you're driving in your car, or when you're walking down the street being bullied by a car, rather than immediately clicking in to all of your habitual aversive thinking and feeling, just take a breath. Just see what that's like. Just take a breath and be really conscious of your hara. Allow yourself to experience your anger. Or if you're looking at a beautiful body going down the street, you can just take a breath and really feel your presence, and then if you want to continue to crave that which you see in front of you, it's okay. Don't make a judgment of it.

But practice, not only on the cushion but in your life. Just notice that all you need is a hair's breath difference between your reaction and your self. Because what you're doing is creating a slight separation. You're acknowledging that there is some difference between your anger and you and just let it be that breath that noticing. So Sengtsan, who wrote this verse of the Faith Mind, was a leper, and you know, to be a leper back in those days in the sixth century was pretty tough. And not only that, he was a lay person. (Laughter.) That's a Buddhist joke you guys. He was a lay person until he was forty years old and then he was ordained and practiced with his teacher. And it is said that when he finally died he stood under a tree with his hands in gassho and died in that way. So, kind of interesting. We don't have a lot of facts, not a lot of material, about him, but we do know that he was a leper, that he came to Buddhism and his practice when he was older. This verse is attributed to him:

"The great way is not difficult to those who have no preferences. When love and hate are absent, everything becomes clear and undisguised. Make the smallest distinction however, and heaven and earth are set infinitely apart."

When love and hate are both absent. Hard line for most of us. Most of us, I think, say, "yeah, we shouldn't hate, but we should love. Right? And this is asking a lot. This is in a sense equating love and hate. And more and more I can appreciate that aversion, hatred, marginalizing is just the other side of love. It's the same thing, just a different way of doing it. You know, "come here go away." In a way it's the same thing. So "when love and hate are both absent" what is he getting at? How we work with love and hate. "Everything becomes clear and undisguised." If you think about love you think of all the things that encompass our idea of love and so this is very tricky territory in a kind of Christian country to bash love a little bit. But if you think about love, a lot of things we call love are not love at all.

Someone was telling me about a friend of hers whose daughter is 13 and how this mother is going through this enormous depression and anger because it's time for the daughter to grow up and separate, it's time for the daughter to go out and do other things and not cling to the mother all the time. And the mother has received a lot of nurturing from her daughter and she's very angry with her daughter for growing up. And this is a sophisticated woman so she knows that this is the situation and nevertheless, she's suffering a great deal. So you wonder what kind of love is that? Is that love?

Sengtsan says, "when love and hate are both absent everything becomes clear and undisguised." So, can you imagine a moment with the mother and the daughter facing one another, and if all of the ideas about what a mother is and what a daughter is could fall away, if all of the preconditions, the requirements for an acceptable relationship, could fall away and leave just these two people in that moment, with no guarantees about the next

moment, but in just that moment, what a beautiful experience (slight smiling pause) I put beautiful on it and I'm now turning it into something else, twisting and turning it into something else. But this is what he's talking about. He's talking about when you let go of your ideas about what anything is and you just experience that, you're on the Great Way. Mmmm (takes a breath), take a breath right now, and let go of any anxiety in your body and just -- just be here.

Another thing that Sengtsan says a little further down is that, "when you try to stop activity to achieve passivity, your very effort fills you with activity. As long as you remain in one extreme or the other you will never know oneness." So, this is when you try to stop activity to achieve passivity, so if you (Enkyo takes a deep breath), I must say that the first five years or so of my practice I used to sit like a robot. I used to go and sit down and say (severe voice), "I'm going to sit down and I'll get it," and I'd sit and be so tight I'm sure that's why I grew these bone spurs in my neck. Just sort of jamming it in arrrr, you know, all that energy to achieve the Middle Way? Filled with the activity of trying to be one. I see that ease is really important, to have a relaxed body with discipline you do have to sit down and you have to pay attention. It's really important to carry it throughout your life too, all day long, not just go sit for five hours at night, but all day long to breathe and to do it with ease. And to have that ease in all aspects of your life aaaah. When we are comfortable with ourselves, then we can let others in.

At the end of the fourth mini-verse Sengtsan says: "One thing, all things. Move among and intermingle without distinction. To live in this realization is to be without anxiety about non-perfection. To live in this faith, is the road to non-duality, because the non-dual is one with the trusting mind. Words the Way is beyond language for in it there is no yesterday, no tomorrow, no today."

To live in this faith is the road to non-duality because the non dual is one with the trusting mind. And what is the mind trusting in? Yourself. Your experience. The Faith Mind Verse is not about

believing the Dharma, or believing in the Buddha, becoming a soldier of Buddha. Faith Mind is, "to live in this realization is to be without anxiety about non-perfection." Aaaaah. You know that's it.

We're so busy protecting ourselves and judging ourselves and then externalizing that and judging others that we can't live in that kind of trust. And there's such a freedom in that trust. Just do it. Just go, step by step along the path. It may have 99 curves on it, but you can walk straight along that path. Like Kendo's name, Straight-ahead-way. That's what this is about. Straight-ahead-way. So trust yourself.

Ikku said: "The lotus flower is unstained by mud. This single dew drop, just as it is, manifests the real body of truth." The lotus flower is often used in Buddhist iconography and metaphor, because it grows out of the stinking mud. It's this incredibly beautiful flower. But if you put a lotus bulb in pure, pristine water, it wouldn't grow, it would die. It grows in mud in stinking mud. And you all know what a lotus looks like it's absolutely beautiful. Completely what we would call pure.

And so he says: "The lotus flower is unstained by mud. This single dew drop, just as it is, manifests the body of truth." The body of truth. This very body becomes the Buddha. We say this all the time. The Buddha, the one who wakes up, trust in yourself, that you can wake up. This very body becomes the Buddha. Think about it.