

It is already the 6th day of our sesshin. We're being pushed to the end now. To make an analogy with cooking dinner, you've got your vegetables on the fire to be really cooking now. It smells delicious, doesn't it? You haven't actually tasted it yet though, so you don't really know how it tastes, but the smell it's looking like a feast already. But it's not cooked yet, so you definitely don't get complacent, you don't say "Hah, Finally I've got it now". You don't take the pot off the fire yet. It's easy at this time to grow careless, to turn the flame down, or to turn off the flame, or to even set the pot down on the floor. Get careless now and what happens? Maybe the neighbour's dog knocks the pot over and gobbles up the feast. So where does that leave you? Having got careless and dropped it before you have even tasted the feast, you can't really get angry at yourself. It doesn't do any good to harbour regrets. You just have to pick up the radish, peel it, wash it. Take the potatoes one by one, cut this, boil, turn the water, season. You might think, but I've already gotten this far. Maybe so, but what are you doing but this one thing, this one step? Peeling this one potato. You cannot deceive yourself at any point – you stay with this. Stay with this. The feast is cooking. You've got six days of sitting under your belt. Stay with this. You've got hungry guests to feed, but you yourself have not yet tasted the food. You have got to taste the food first, otherwise how can you know? You have to sample the feast before you can serve others. You have to know, "mmm, this is good!" Only then can you understand. Then, only then, can you serve. Only then can you know just how to serve just right, to fit the feast to the guest. Your service - once you have tasted the feast yourself, your service will arise from kindness –natural kindness. But although the feast is ready, and you don't even taste it, well, if you don't taste the feast yourself, no matter how much you talk about it to others, you won't be able to lead others to taste it either.

This is the sixth day. You are down to the wire. How is it for you now – don't look off! How does it taste? Are you feasting? Are you thinking, "I don't taste anything good"? Good. Now.. just now.. here.. this place..as it is.

The person you rejoice in everything, is a person of joy. When we go on *takahatsu* (alms begging), we hand out pieces of paper with these words to those from whom we receive alms, "Now. Just Now. I am alive. That is Now. Just Now. Life. Buddha Life is nowhere else. Buddha life is Now. Just Now".

All over the world, whether it be in the mountains, by the sea, in the middle of a bustling city, no matter what the conditions one finds themselves in, it is Now. Only Now. There is no separation from Now, now being away from Now. Now is always and forever your reality. Now. Now. Now. Now. Now is life. All being is contained.. Now. Of course, Now is not graspable, Now cannot be grasped. If you've grasped it, it's gone. It may appear to you that it can't be grasped, it isn't [it doesn't exist]. Anytime. Anyone. One is always the master. Anytime. Anyone. Don't look off, that means you.. Now. Now, just Now.. Here..just Here. As it arises, it is Here.

Is it narrow, is it wide? All things are wrapped up in the belly of the genuine. In this place.. Now.. Just Now.. Here.. in this place.. as it is – all being. You want to attach conditions, "this", "that", the other". Go ahead. Work your head if you like. No conditions adhere to the One.

True All. True everything is beyond conditions. This place.. as it is.. as it is. If you are analysing it, placing conditions.... If you are thinking, you have found it, you have got it... in a flash, its gone. Change is swift, conditions have changed. That's the way it is. Impermanence is swift. Nothing abides for an instant. If it appears fixed, you are grasping. Everyone is grasping "I". We want it to be a place we like. We want things as we like them to be. We are always naming our conditions. We never take a rest from that activity. And yet all of that is grabbed right out from under us. We are deceived. We deceive ourselves. It's not that we are bad, it's just we are all running around under the impression that the false "I" is real. The artificial "I" sets up conditions for self gratification and (re-)evaluating and judging everything: "This is good". "That's bad" .. if you want to spend your whole life doing that. Now. Just Now. This Place. Just like it is. The person who rejoices in everything, is a joyful person. Nothing is missing.. left out. All things are truth. Now. Just Now. This place, just like it is. It arises with relation to time, place, circumstance. However it arises, the person who rejoices in everything, is a person of joy. So be of joy. You can be a joyful person. Well, if I go around grinning about everything, I will be taken for a fool, won't I? So keep it to yourself. I am not saying wear it on your sleeve. One with This.. joy. Alone all by yourself.. smile and be happy. Joy. Joyful mind. True understanding. This is true understanding. True joy leaves no traces, not even traces of joy. There is no grasping. Joy. Is this for real? Are there times of such joy?

When I first came to this temple, it was in *shoa* 30, the year 30. It was march 3rd. I was thirty years old. Lots of auspicious, joyful threes. When I first came here I didn't really know what I was doing, but I was prepared to give it my best and I asked for the cooperation of the parishioners. They were saying, this guy has come hear penniless with just the shirt on his back. Its true, I didn't bring anything with me. In fact, I have hardly ever even been out shopping. It seems in that fifty years here I've hardly shopped at all, but I suppose I have. Anyway, that June, after I arrived in March, the twenty something families of the parishioners of this temple, cleared the mountain behind here. They cut the trees to chop for firewood and they were very, very thorough in their clearing. By the end of the month, this mountain was bald. They didn't leave so much as a sapling. August, September, November, when December came, it was time to prepare the decorations for new years, so I went to the bald mountain out back here and looking up from below I saw some branches from an old pine tree at the tip of the mountain that looked good. Of course, they didn't cut the pines on the peak. No-one was out there that December day. I climbed to the top and walked along the crest and I got several branches. It was all rocks there, with almost no vegetation, no trees, only boulders. I decided to drop the branches from the cliff for they were too big for me to carry. I remember watching them go down, the first one dropping slowly and quietly down, the next one was the same. They looked like parachutes sailing down, so I decided to take the same path down – straight down. That was not smart. I really didn't have any experience climbing the mountains or working in the moutains. It looked easy enough, but it turned out not to be the case. I didn't know what I was getting myself into. From the top I started to back down the almost vertical mountain and I was planning on grabbing whatever I could and climbing down. There were some mountain azaleas there, so I let one foot down, but the azalea branch wouldn't support the

weight of my body. So after having let my foot down only once, the azalea broke loose and before I knew it I was hurtling down the mountain. The green and blue of the skies were opening up before me as I attempted to grasp the air. This giving your all is what I am always wanting you to see for yourself. I was definitely falling for all I was worth - giving my all to falling. Before I knew it I was down some tens of metres, upside down in the air. The mountain was a series of boulders. Of course, I had not time to think about how it all looked at that instant, but as I fell I did reflect on one thing. I thought human beings cannot be selfish. It happened so fast but I remember well that self reflection. Suddenly there was a shock – an impact. My whole body somehow made a thud. Within those seconds life was burning to God life. When my eyes adjusted in that split second I saw that a branch had caught to break my fall, and it was the one sole branch – thin – about the thickness of my thumb. It stuck out about a metre, or a metre and a half from the rocks. Shaking, I grabbed it and held onto it with all my life. I had landed there on that branch just some four metres above the foot of the mountain. I thought I saw several young men not so far away and I would have yelled for help, but I paused to discriminate, and I decided that it would be embarrassing to call out for help. So I am looking down four metres.. I said, “I can do this”. I will just take it slow and easy. I took several deep breaths and I made it down safely. From the bottom I looked way up to see the top of the mountain – the lone pine tree there. I fell down that far. It was all boulders, rocks – no trees. That one lone branch had caught my fall and it was the only branch. That one branch saved my life. Joy. It was pure joy. From the depths of life – joy. I just naturally raised my hands together in *gassho*. I chanted the *Jiku Kanongyo*. I couldn't stay still, I raced back to the front of the temple. *Kobi san* was there, she's the old lady who lives in the house out in front of the temple – she's ninety now. I shouted her name, and she asked me if I had found something on the mountain. I told her that I had fallen down all the way. I remember her two or three you old daughter was at her feet. I grabbed the child and hugged her and normally that child would have howled in tears, but this time she was quite happy to see me. That joyful energy must have communicated itself to her just naturally. That night, I went for a bath at *Kobi san's* house – the temple bath was broken. I found a bright purple bruise on my lower back next to the bone. This is where the branch caught me. If some other place had caught the branch, that could have been the end. I could have broken my neck, or something, but I was caught in just the right place – it saved my life. For a year, or a year and a half so after that incident, after chanting sutras, I would go there to chant to that branch. One day about a year and a half later, I found that the branch had fallen. It had rotted and fallen naturally. I had the base cut – it was rotten too. It's in the *Kanon do* now with worm holes in it. What if had rotted at some earlier time, it would not have been there to save my life? What if *Yoshita san* had seen that limb when he had cleared the mountain? He would have cut it straight away. It would not have been there to save my life. I would be having my 48th memorial service this year, but I wouldn't be memorialised here as I had just arrived. If I had lost consciousness there I might not have been found for quite some time. Now.. just Now.. right here.. this place.. just like this.. the person who rejoices in everything, is the person of joy. In everything, and all things, all of life is this one branch. All of life is this One Thing.

A maple branch protected me. If it had grown from the mountain a few centimetres from that place, it probably would not have been there to rescue me and it caught me just in the right place. The reality, though, is that you are protected by everything all the time, and you are not seeing it. This Breath. This One Breath. Now. Here seems insignificant, but what a wonder it is. This instant Now.. Here- you are protected. This one branch, it was right here for me. Who was it right there? Interdependent, thanks to all beings, THIS appears. Thanks to all beings, THIS appears, and everything comes to you just perfectly. Don't you want to be able to see that? If it weren't for all Being, there would be no-one. Humans with our reliance on discriminating mind regard only that which we happen to see as protecting us, or not protecting us. Discriminating mind is always looking to gratify itself, choosing that which would appear to benefit self, to take care of self. That which we regard as getting in the way of self gratification, we see as an opponent, an enemy, an obstacle, a disturbance. But that view, as real as it seems to you, as much as you take it for granted, that view is distorted. It is not in accord with reality. The One in the All, the All in the One – *shitante*- This One doing. This One Doing is just exactly all Being. This One Doing. This precious perfect.. One Doing. All.. All.. All.. All Being. Everything is doing this One Doing. If it weren't for All Being, Now-Here would not be. The person who rejoices in All Being.. Now.. Just Now.. Right Here.. Just as it IS, is a joyful being. The All. The One. So very intimate. So close, so familiar. It is True Self. You say "I","I","me","me", but there is not so much as a pinpoint of anything, which is made by "me". You find it hard to agree with that, don't you? It seems you are creating your "self", that you are working on your "self". We think we are working on our "selves", but if you open up your eyes and look, we can see that there is no such sweet looking thing as "I". You aren't building an "I" up at all. Some people will hear that and feel lonely, because it seems to them that if there is no "I", what is there to live for? What is the meaning of life? Look at the facts. This "I","me","mine", that you rely on so totally, is always right there to deceive you. Don't you often find yourself doing things that you don't want to do? Don't things come your way, that you wouldn't have [don't want to] come? Aren't things seemingly forced upon you left and right? So, is this "I" really in control? Is this "I" really existing? Is it really the meaning of your life? You will find that it wasn't so. Receiving All.. All Being receiving. All Being ... Heaven and Earth.. One Root. All the myriad things ... One Body. This One Truth. This is what *Shakyamuni Buddha* wakened to. What *Shakyamuni Buddha* is guiding us to see for ourselves: Heaven and Earth – I alone. Nothing is separate, distant, left out. Nothing harmed, nothing damaged, nothing lost. Perfect like the vast skies. You can receive it right here, rolling around on the palm of your hand. Now.. Here.. You are perfectly protected. The person who rejoices in All Being.. Now.. Just Now, Right Here.. Just as it IS, is a joyful being. What a pity not to rejoice. What a waste. What a pity not to rejoice and be able to say "thank you", "thank you" for taking care of me. How can you help but revere.. This One Truth. Self reveres Self. Self is worshipping Self. This One Doing...Self worshipping Self.

Please, I urge you to steadily care for, nourish Now..Here. Now..Here ...treat this with great care. With great care, become This One Doing. Become This One Doing. There is no separation. All is This One Doing. Please. When one person attains peace of mind, that peace is felt by all beings. If you become a person who

can worship everything, a person of joy, it is definitely communicated to all beings. Together all beings – One. All beings worship together. You can become such a person. You can. You have this deep, deep, connection with Buddha dharma. Please carry through. Let go of body and mind. Forget about them. Throw them into the house of Buddha. When you do this, all is done by Buddha. All is done by Buddha. This is exactly This One Doing.... You're One Doing... All is done by Buddha.

Together with all beings we attain the Buddha way.