**Selections from**

***MANIFESTING ZEN: THE ESSENTIAL TEACHINGS OF KYŌZAN JŌSHŪ SASAKI: DHARMA TALKS FROM MT. BALDY***

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***Teishos from Six Sesshins at the Mt. Baldy Zen Center from March-October, 1986***

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**PRELIMINARY DRAFT MANUSCRIPT**

**CHAPTER ONE: TEISHOS FROM** **MARCH 1986 SESSHIN**

**MT. BALDY ZEN CENTER**

***TOPICS: Rinzai Roku,* “Discourses” Section III[[1]](#endnote-1)**

**DAY 1 : March 2, 1986**

**The Master ascended the hall and said, "Here within this sphere of red flesh there is a True Person of no fixed position.[[2]](#endnote-2) [[3]](#endnote-3) Constantly it goes in and out the gateways of your senses. [[4]](#endnote-4) Those of you who have not yet confirmed this, look! Look!" At that time there was a monk who came forward and asked "What about the True Person of no fixed position?" The Master got down from his chair, seized hold of the monk and said, "Speak! Speak!" The monk hesitated, whereupon the Master let go of him, shoved him away, and said, "This True Person of no fixed position—what a dried turd!"[[5]](#endnote-5) The Master then returned to his quarters.**

Starting today, we are commencing another *dai sesshin*. As you know, this will be the last *sesshin* of the winter *seichu*.[[6]](#endnote-6) And once this *seichu* is over, it’s okay for all of you to go wherever you want to. And today I would like to give a *teisho* on the section of the *Rinzai Roku* we have just read. I’ve yet to discuss part of the previous passage but since today is the first day of a new *sesshin*, I would like to begin on the next passage, a new passage.

It is said that the discourses recorded here were given by Rinzai, the Master. And what is going on here is that Rinzai is giving a talk on the Dharma. There are many things he could talk about but essentially what is being discussed here is the Dharma activity, the activity that gives rise to the myriad things in the universe. So regardless of whether a Zen Dharma talk is given, it is essentially about this Dharma activity I am discussing here. This talk here is indeed said to have been given by Rinzai, and when we look at it we see that he was staking everything, staking his life as it were on the giving of this talk.

Every person does have a heart/mind.[[7]](#endnote-7) And this does in a sense give rise to one’s being here, one’s manifestation. Without a heart/mind there is no way the self, or one’s personhood could come into being. What we might say is that thing we call the heart/mind is that which possesses character or personality. And so everyone does manifest this heart/mind of this body that has personality. And what Rinzai is doing here is bringing forth the heart/mind that all of us possess.

And Rinzai says something curious here. He says that although we do exist here as a heart/mind of body with personality, at the same time this must lead to the manifestation of what he’s calling the one True Person of No Fixed Position, this being that is not attached to the position of the Buddha, and is certainly not caught up with what we call the normal human way of being. Now it might appear here that this one True Person of No Fixed Position is discussed as something rather strange or mysterious, but indeed there’s nothing mysterious about this. This is the one true being without any attachment to the sacred or the mundane. And what we must grasp here is Rinzai’s unique thought that although we are manifesting this personality here, at the same time we’re also manifesting that which does not have personality, that which is without will or desire and non-attached to any position.

So what Rinzai says here is that this one True Person of No Fixed Position, that is not attached to belonging to either the sacred or the profane, is also called the true follower of the way. I believe if you do try to grasp this one True Person of No Fixed Position as the no-self follower of the way, the selfless follower of the way, you will get a better handle on what Rinzai is getting at here. And we must ask here what kind of activity you can engage in and thereby manifest and realize this no-self follower of the way, this selfless follower, or the True Person of No Fixed Position. Indeed this is something you must devote time to in your study and research into this, You must study this carefully and slowly without getting bored and without getting frustrated that you’re not moving along.

Now we might ask what it is that manifests or realizes this one True Person of No Fixed Position or this selfless follower of the way. But indeed it is the self that is there with a body, with a heart/mind, and that is to say with personality, that manifests this other type of being. And what we get to here is the idea presented by Rinzai, that the self does present two activities or two types of self: the self, the heart/mind, the body with personality, and the self that is without personality, this true self or this true being without position.

Now, when this self that has personality, or shall we say that self that has a heart/mind, does study these two types of self, these two types of activity, if that self, the self without personality, does not clearly grasp what the self is all about, there’s no way it can even begin to grasp what this selfless follower of the way, or this True Person of No Fixed Position, is all about. And the self that has a heart/mind and does act in various ways is the self that does breathe, that is here alive right now. And so, this heart/mind, or this heart/mind with personality is the self that inhales and exhales here. And this self that exhales is engaging in the expansive activity. And this activity of the heart/mind also engages in an opposite direction, an activity of contraction. And what Rinzai is saying here is that this heart/mind with personality does manifest this one True Person of No Fixed Position, when it says in the text there is the one True Person. It means this person is manifested by the self as it moves in the expansive and the expanding direction.

And what Rinzai says here is that this heart/mind with personality, with self, does engage in the expansive or spreading direction, and in the opposite activity, the contracting or concentrating activity. What he says here is that this activity goes on all the time, constantly, every day. What Rinzai says here is that this activity is going on from dawn until dusk every day without fail. And when he’s talking about this term “*nan jira,*” or “all of you,” indeed he’s talking about all the people practicing here.[[8]](#endnote-8) And what he’s saying here is that all of these people practicing the way, all of these people who have matured as a self in some sense, are engaging in sensual experience through the different orifices, through the different senses of our being.[[9]](#endnote-9)

And so what Rinzai is talking about is the six sense faculties we possess, and what he’s saying is that this selfless true person or true follower of the way is going in and out of these senses, is being manifested in the exhale, and also is being realized in the inhale.

So we have these six faculties, and by virtue of these we do engage in relationship with a variety of things around us. Things like pine trees, the moon, stars and the universe as a whole. And if there is some kind of perfect being around, does this being have such faculties, these six sense faculties?

And indeed as you’ve studied up until now you’ll know that Bodhidharma has a beard.[[10]](#endnote-10) But it is recorded in the text that one monk said, Bodhidharma has no beard.[[11]](#endnote-11) You have noses. But it’s said that at the same time you don’t have noses. So you at the same time having a beard just like Bodhidharma you do not have a beard. And it must be said here that Bodhidharma not only has no beard, he has no self either. He has no heart/mind. And this must reach the point where you realize that you too have no self, you have no heart/mind.

So you do have these six sense faculties, and by virtue of them you do establish different relationships with the pine trees, the mountain and the stars. But you must reach the point where you have a direct relationship with these things without relying on your sense faculties. So what Rinzai is saying here is that all of us do have these six sense faculties and through them we manifest the universe and the things in it and establish intimate relationships with them.

Indeed as you know there are people that call Rinzai Zen “Shogun Zen” or “General Zen” and perhaps this attitude originates in sayings like this. And Rinzai talks about a lump of red flesh here. We must grasp this lump of red flesh as the heart/mind that is no-thing, the heart of Mu, of nothingness.[[12]](#endnote-12) If we don’t grasp it this way, there is no way we can understand Rinzai’s talk here. What I’d like you to do here is to take time to study this and to realize what’s going on here. Indeed all of you have developed and matured here through the use of your six sense faculties, but I want to ask you this question: What is the self when you don’t rely on these faculties, when you don’t rely on the nose or the eyes? Indeed if the six sense faculties do not develop, there is no way you can establish a relationship with the external world. But what is the self in which the six sense faculties aren’t functioning? What is the situation there? And where in the world does this self emerge from, where is it born from?

If you don’t grasp where the self arises from, there’s no way you can understand this one True Person of No Fixed Position, this selfless follower of the way. The self ultimately is this one True Person of No Fixed Position, and if you realize where this one True Person or this selfless follower of the way emerges from, you will not have to grasp this at all, you will not get caught up in wondering what this talk is all about. If you grasp the wisdom that understands the self that emerges without personality, there will be nothing as pleasant, nothing as easy for you. Conversely, if you only realize the self that emerges with personality, you’ll get caught up in this, and there’ll be no way you’ll be able to understand this one True Person of No Fixed Position. And when you’re caught up there, there’s nothing busier, there’s nothing more demanding.

So from where does this heart/mind with personality that acts and function here arise? This is something that I must have all of you grasp without fail. And what’s said here is that this person without any position is born from the place, from the seat as it were, that is not caught up in the sacred or the profane. It is brought forth from the source that is referred to here as the lump of red flesh. And this lump of red flesh also comes forth as the heart/mind without personality, and this is born from the deeper source of the one True Person of No Fixed Position. And what’s said here is that you must, through *zazen*, study how it is that this lump of red flesh with personality emerges from a source that has no personality. And I think all of you have heard about this many times, so to some extent you probably understand what I’m talking about here. Now if I talk at greater length about this it might become a little clearer. But what’s your understanding now? What do you think about this?

The self is sitting here breathing, breathing in and out. And when the self engages in the activity of breathing in, it must then engage in the activity of exhaling or breathing out. And what you must do to understand what Rinzai is getting at here is to study this breathing, this Zen practice that centers around your breathing here and now.

Now, try inhaling. And what you’ll find is that when you breathe in you’ll reach an extreme point of the inhalation, at which there is no need to breathe in any longer. And from there you’ll begin to exhale. And when you reach this extreme point of the inhalation, conversely you’ll begin the exhalation. And when you fully exhale you’ll eventually reach the extreme point of the exhalation. And when you attain to and reach this extreme point of the exhalation then out of that the inhalation will emerge again. And so breathing Zen is the method by which you study this practice of inhaling and exhaling, this act of breathing fully. And indeed, if you stop breathing, you’ll go away. So in “breathing Zen” it is said that the self is that which is here breathing in and out. It is constituted by this breathing. And this type of Zen concretely grasps that this self that inhales and exhales here is that which gives being or brings into establishment all things around us.

Now this activity of breathing does engage in inhaling and exhaling without will, without desire. Now you might have the thought, “Oh, I must breathe here.” But this arises from thinking about your breathing. When you fully breathe, this thought does not emerge. You just continue breathing without will and without desire. So, fundamentally, or we might say originally, the breath is something that is emerging here without any thought, without any will and without any desire.

So when we reach the extreme point of the inhalation, we reach the point at which, without will and without desire, inhalation and exhalation split apart. And what happens is that the exhalation emerges or splits away from this inhalation and starts acting and functioning in the exhale. And so what is it that emerges when the exhalation and the inhalation split apart? It is space that emerges here.

Now if space does not emerge between the exhalation and the inhalation, there is no way for the split of the two to occur. But the split emerges again without will, without desire. And because it is this kind of situation, there’s no way that we can know this. So it is “breathing Zen” that teaches that it is space that emerges between the inhalation and the exhalation, and that this space is taken as the body or the form by all the things that emerge here in actuality. And what is said here is that space merges as the five *skandhas*, as the self as understood by Buddhism.[[13]](#endnote-13) And this activity that emerges and that brings about the self, is something that acts without will and without desire.

Although this activity is without will and without desire, we do get the emergence of the self, of the self that does have feeling or sentience. This is something you must study through your *zazen*. And so we do get this split between the exhalation and the inhalation, and when the inhalation reaches the extreme point, there is a state where there’s no need to talk, where there is no will, no desire. It’s called the self. And this is the self that emerges as the myriad things in the activity of the Dharma. Now when you inhale completely and before you begin to exhale, there is a situation in which this will-less, thought-less, and desire-less self emerges completely. Now a situation in which there is no thought at all, this is the source, the base of the self. Now, there is a limit to the separation between the inhalation and the exhalation. What I’m saying is that the self that emerges here with space as its body or form, does attain to a certain extreme point or limit. It is limited.

And what happens here is that when the separation between the exhalation and the inhalation reaches the extreme point, the self that thinks, the self that we call the five *skandhas*, does emerge. This is something that you must study quite hard here in your *zazen*, and you must have some help from those who are farther down the path.

So what we must study here is why it is that this self, this thinking, emerges here. Everybody: think about this. Without fail, this thinking self emerges. And so when we have this split activity of exhaling and inhaling, we get the emergence of space, and space emerges and develops in the exhale. And what might happen is that people might stick to the exhalation, and not try to engage in fully the inhalation. But indeed, space does emerge here with the exhalation and does emerge with the splitting of the exhalation from the inhalation.

Now look carefully in your *zazen* and you’ll begin to understand that the thinking self emerges here in the exhalation along with the emergence of space, and tries to avoid the inhalation, and posits itself on that side alone saying, “Here I am, existing.” Now what happens is, insofar as we are manifesting ourselves in this exhalation there is no need to grasp it objectively. However, when we reach the extreme point of the exhalation and the inhalation emerges we feel we are pulled by that inhalation, we objectify it and stand apart from it. The original heart/mind that emerges here is that which engages in this activity, the activity of breathing. And what happens here is this heart/mind that emerges does take the inhalation as an object, it does reach a point where it objectifies the inhalation.

Now you are studying various *kōan*s here, but please, take the time to study this and learn the principle that is gotten at by breath or “breathing Zen.” (End of Side 1; a few seconds are lost when the audio cassette tape is switched)

(So the self) does reach the extreme point of the split of exhaling and inhaling. It reaches the point where it is identifies with this exhalation and rests there (in its external world). So it finds some sort of security there and abides there. But as I’ve just said, this self resting there is the self that objectifies the inhalation. It’s here, it’s often here that mistakes emerge. And when people do Zen and practice Zen and get caught up in mistakes it’s often here that they make the mistakes. And so the self emerges in the exhalation, it emerges spontaneously and naturally without thinking about it. However, when it reaches the extreme point of the exhalation, should it then turn and objectify the inhalation, it is making a grave mistake.

So this is sometimes called the Smaller Vehicle (Hinayana) Zen.[[14]](#endnote-14) And this expression emerges because indeed there are people that have practiced Zen for 20, 30 years, and rest assured that they’ve had some sort of realization, and start talking about all this to other people. But indeed many of these people seem to be caught up only in the exhalation and cannot understand the full thing I’m talking about because they objectify the inhalation. Because they objectify the inhalation, they are not liberated from the activity of will and desire and consciousness. And if we aren’t liberated in that manner, then there is no way that we can talk about attaining to true security. And so the self at this point must establish a relationship with the inhalation. And what this is indeed is a completion of the out-breathing here. And this is indeed a difficult part, it is a little convoluted here. But I want you to realize that you must attain to this completion, this fullness of breathing. And indeed the difficult point here is that this will-less, desire-less breathing is the breathing that exists in the split between the exhalation and the inhalation, the in-breathing and out-breathing.

What’s difficult here is that point that, when the inhalation is completed there is a situation, a state of affairs, that is not related to the breathing. And this state of affairs is existing in the split between the inhalation and the exhalation. And when this situation that is not related to breathing reaches an extreme point, then the thought emerges that “Now I must exhale” and this activity of consciousness leads to the exhalation. And this is an activity that accompanies the in-breathing, it’s an activity of out-breathing, the activity of expansion. And what emerges here is this expanded, this opened-up self.

What happens is, this out-breathing occurs, and this expansion opens up, and then this, too, reaches an extreme point where there is no thought, no will or desire. And at this extreme point you get the split out of which the in-breathing begins. And here, at the extreme point of this out-breathing, there exists the self that does not think, that does not need to have will or desire. And so what happens is, at this extreme point of the out-breathing where there is no thought, no will and no desire, there eventually emerges the activity of consciousness that thinks, “I must inhale now.” And out of this there emerges the inhalation. What happens is, in the course of this in-breathing, eventually one attains to the self that no longer needs to think. And so this repetition continues here, and repeatedly the point is reached where there is no need to think. And so what happens here in this breath Zen or breathing Zen, is that one grasps what is involved in the emergence of this thinking self and in the disappearance where there is no thinking, and then the emergence of another thinking self. If you don’t understand the principles then there’s no way you’ll understand Rinzai’s talk here.

What becomes clear if you grasp what’s going on here in breathing Zen is that Rinzai is talking about this true person of no position going in and out of the face of every one of you, what he’s getting at here is this breathing process in which the thinking self emerges and then reaches the point at which the thinking self emerges and then reaches the point at which there’s no need to think. And then for example in the inhalation there is another process that leads to the self that is completed and does not need to think. What Rinzai is saying here is, it is expected that you’ve experienced this. We can expect that you’ve experienced this living self that will bleed when cut and cry when struck, this living self that manifests the self and does not need to think. And so because this is the case, because the self is acting here, you are living every day. And what he’s saying here is that if you do exist without realizing the self that does not need to think, the self that exists in the exhalation and the inhalation, you merely exist as this living lump of red flesh that gets sick, that cries, and gets cut and bleeds. You get sick here because you imagine that this true self, this living self, is conditioned, is limited, and thereby you fixate it. This is difficult, quite difficult here, because all of us tend to think from the standpoint of this fixated self. But the self is not something fixated.

The self manifests this living, concrete, lump-of-red-flesh-self and at the same time it also manifests the self that does not need to think. And so, what Rinzai is doing, is talking about this one True Person of No Fixed Position, this selfless self, and saying, how is it that every day you manifest this lump of red flesh? Now all of you are manifesting this lump of red flesh, this living self, and therefore you get caught up in thinking, “Ah this is good and that is bad.” Now because you do have this experience, inevitably the self that does not need to think, the self without position, also emerges and is manifested here. And Rinzai is not asking you directly about this living self, but I am. And so, in this manifestation of the living self, there inevitably is the manifestation of the formless self, of this True Person of No Fixed Position. How do you manifest that, how do you manifest this true person, Tony? There’s no more time today, so let’s stop here.

You must manifest this self that is liberated from personality. You must do this. And if you think you can do this, and put everything into it, you can manifest this, for example, by diving into a pool. Become naked, and dive!

1. Ruth Fuller Sasaki (trans.), *The Recorded Sayings of Ch’an Master Lin-chi Hui-chao of Chen Prefecture*. Kyoto: Institute for Zen Studies, 1975. All references to this text are to this edition, although it has largely been superseded by the more meticulously documented translation by Thomas Kirchner that incorporates Sasaki’s work and that of the scholarly project she headed up in the 1950 and 60’s. This impressive group included Rōshi Miura Isshū, Profs. Iriya Yoshitaka, Yanagida Seizan, Phillip Yampolsky, and Gary Snyder and Dana Fraser (See Ruth Fuller Sasaki (trans.), *The Record of Linji*. Edited by Thomas Yūhō Kirchner. University of Hawaii Press, 2009.) I use the 1975 edition because that’s the one Jōshū Rōshi was commenting on. For another accessible translation see also Burton Watson (trans.), *The Zen Teachings of Master Linji*. 1st ed., Shambhala Press, 1993, p. 13. *The Records of Rinzai*  contains the recorded sayings and narratives from the life of Rinzai Gigen, the Japanese pronunciation of the name of the Chinese Chan master, Linji Yixuan (d. 868 C.E.), the found of one of the three surviving schools of Zen Buddhism, the Rinzai School. Jõshū Rōshi is a member of this tradition and traces his own Zen lineage directly back to the famous systematizer of current Rinzai practice, Hakuin Ekaku. All Rinzai Zen masters in Japan ultimately trace their lineage back to Rinzai in ninth century China. Throughout our work we will use the Japanese pronunciation of his name. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Rinzai’s metaphor for the True Self, the transformed and liberated mode of cognition attained through Zen practice. It reacts spontaneously to every situation from a constantly changing standpoint that is free of attachment, hence “no fixed position.” Kirchner notes that a variant recension of the *Records of Rinzai* has an interesting rephrasing: instead of “lump of red flesh” it reads “your body field of the five *skandhas*” (see n.12)五陰身田 (Kirchner p. 130). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. RF Sasaki, *Lin-Chi*, p. 3. Changing “True Man of No Rank” to “True Person of no fixed position” to better suit Rōshi’s unique Zen teaching. I have also taken the liberty of making a few other changes in thiss translation to better render the vivid sense of the Chinese original. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Normally translated as “gates of the face.” For this meaning see Kirchner’s note on pp. 130-31. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Following Kircher, p. 131 in emending the original RF Sasaki translation from shit-wiping stick” to dried piece of shit.” “Turd” substitutes nicely. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. *Seichu*  is the traditional Zen term for a training period. In our *sangha*, it lasted for about four months from the first week of December until the middle to end of March. Rōshi led a sesshin every month for these four months. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. The character 心 (Chinese: *xin*; Japanese: *kokoro*) literally means the heart but in many cases, especially in Buddhist texts, means the mind. Starting in fifth century BCE China and perhaps earlier, the *xin* or heart was thought to be the seat of ALL conscious activities, including emotions, of course, but also including thoughts, perceptions, and intuitions. Hence it is the rough equivalent of the English concept of “mind.” But it also retains the idea of the physical heart. Rōshi uses the term “*kokoro*”: to keep the sense of this complex meaning, I have decided to render the translator’s original “heart” as “heart/mind.” [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. The expression “nan jira” basically means “you guys,” and it appears, for example, at the beginning of “Daito Kokushi’s Admonition” (*Daitokokushi yuikai*): “Nanjira shonin kono sanchu ni….” that is chanted daily in Myoshinji zendos worldwide. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. This is what Rinzai means by his phrase “the doors of your face.” [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Bodhidharma is the legendary first and founding patriarch of the Zen tradition. Hagiographical sources from the Chan tradition say he came to China from India in the first quarter of the sixth century C.E. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. This is a reference to the famous *kōan* in case 4 of the *Mumonkan* (“Gateless Gate”). For a good translation and analysis see, Katsuki Sekida, *Two Zen Classics*. Weatherhill, 1976, pp. 37-38. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. *Mu* 無 (Chinese: *Wu*) means literally “nothing” or “not having.” It is the opposite of *Yu* 有 (Chinese: *You*), which literally means “something” or “having.” These terms are often translated as the Indo-European metaphysical concepts of “Nonbeing” and “Being” but the Chinese and, following it, the Japanese meanings of the term are much more concrete. Here I follow translator Ives in rendering the term as “nothingness”, about as abstract a rendering as the original terms permits. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. The five *skandhas* (lit. “heaps” or “aggregates”) are the constituent aspects of human beings in the classical Buddhist teaching from the Pali Canon, the oldest collection of writings in the tradition. Transmitted orally from the lifetime of the historical Buddha, Gautama Śakyamuni in circa the fifth century BCE, the Canon was first written down in Sri Lanka in circa 90 BCE. The five aggregates are form, sensation, perception, habitual patterns, and consciousness. According to these teachings, they explain the experience of a person in the absence of a fixed and persisting real self. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. This is a standard Mahayana Buddhist reference to the early Indian Buddhist school that is claimed by the Theravada tradition that persists today in Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, and the West. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)