

## To You (1)

by Kōdō Sawaki Rōshi



### 1. To you who can't stop worrying about how others see you

You can't even trade a single fart with the next guy. Each and every one of us has to live out his own life. Don't waste time thinking about who's most talented.

The eyes don't say, "Sure we're lower, but we see more."

The eyebrows don't reply, "Sure we don't see anything, but we are higher up."

Living out the buddha-dharma means fulfilling your function completely without knowing that you're doing it. A mountain doesn't know it's tall. The sea doesn't know it's wide and deep. Each and every thing in the universe is active without knowing it.

*The bird's singing and the flower's laughter appear naturally,  
completely independent from the person sitting in zazen at the foot of the cliff.*

The bird doesn't sing in honor of the person in zazen. The flower doesn't blossom to amaze the person with her beauty. In exactly the same way, the person doesn't sit in zazen in order to get satori. Every single being simply realizes the self, through the self, for the self.

Religion means living your own life, completely fresh and new, without being taken in by anyone.

Hey! What are you looking at? Don't you see that it's about you?

The asshole doesn't need to be ashamed of being the asshole. The feet don't have any reason to go on strike just because they're only feet. The head isn't the most important of all, and the navel doesn't need to imagine he's the father of all things.

It's strange though that people look at the prime minister as an especially important person.

The nose can't replace the eyes, and the mouth can't replace the ears.

Everything has its own identity, which is unsurpassable in the whole universe.

Some children have caught a mouse and now it's writhing in the trap. They're having fun watching how it scrapes its nose till it bleeds and how it rips up its tail . . . In the end they'll throw it to the cat for food.

If I was sitting in the mouse's place, I'd say to myself, "You damn humans won't have any fun with me!" And I'd simply sit zazen..

### 2. To you who think there's something to being "in"

You're always hanging onto others. If somebody's eating French fries, you want French fries too. If somebody's sucking on a candy, you want a candy too. If somebody's blowing on a penny whistle, you scream, "Mommy, buy me a penny whistle too!"  
And that doesn't just go for children.

When spring comes, you let spring turn your head. When autumn comes, you let autumn turn your head. Everyone is just waiting for something to turn their head. Some even make a living turning heads – they produce advertising.

People love emotional confusion. Just look at the film posters in front of the cinema: nothing but emotional confusion on their faces. Buddha-dharma means not putting yourself at the mercy of emotional confusion. In the world, on the other hand, a big fuss is made over nothing.

It goes with being an ordinary person: he can only see with the eyes of collective stupidity.

Being surrounded by heroes and scraping up the courage to play hero yourself – there's nothing so heroic about that. A thief says to his son, "If you don't stop right away with your damned honesty, you'll never be a respectable thief like me. You are a disgrace to the profession!"

Man makes a clever face and talks about being lord on Earth. And at the same time he doesn't even know where to begin with his own body: he watches sports on television and defends himself saying that everyone else does it too.

We live in group stupidity and confuse this insanity with true experience. It is essential that you become transparent to yourself and wake up from this madness. Zazen means taking leave of the group and walking on your own two feet.

One at a time people are still bearable, but when they form cliques, they start to get stupid. They fall into group stupidity. They're so determined to become stupid as a group that they found clubs and pay membership dues. Zazen means taking leave of group stupidity.

### **3. To you who are totally exhausted from fighting with your spouse**

The question isn't who's right. You're simply seeing things from different points of view.

Stop trying to be something special – and just be what you are. Hold fire. Just sit!

It all begins when we say, "I". Everything that follows is illusion.

Everyone imagines that their ego is something unchangeable, some immovable center-point which everything revolves around. There once was a man who said, "Look, everyone is dying except me!" He's been dead for a long time now.

Everybody talks about marrying for love, but isn't it really just marrying for sex? In the end isn't it really only about a penis and a vagina? Why doesn't anybody simply say that he's fallen in love with a vagina?

Take a look sometime at the face of a dog who's just had sex. He just stares into space with strangely empty eyes. It's exactly the same with people – in the beginning they work themselves up into a frenzy, and in the end there's nothing at all.

A man who understands nothing marries a woman who understands nothing, and everyone says, "Congratulations!" Now that's something I cannot understand.

Family is the place where parents and children, husband and wife simultaneously all get on each other's nerves.

When a child is defiant, the parents curse, "You don't understand anything!" But what are the parents like? Isn't it also true that they don't understand anything either? Everyone is lost in ignorance.

Everyone is talking about education, but what are we being educated to be? Ordinary citizens, that's all.

Even funnier than watching the monkeys at the zoo is observing these humans on the loose.

#### **4. To you who have just begun brooding over life**

What a shame to have been born a human being and to spend your whole life worrying. You should reach the point where you can be happy to have been born a human.

Birth, old age, sickness and death – we can't fool around with these ultimate facts.

Reality: getting a handle on this must be our goal. Don't get stuck in categories.

It's strange that not a single person seriously considers his own life. For ages, we've been carrying around something uncooked. And we comfort ourselves with the fact that it's the same for the others too. That's what I call group stupidity: thinking that we just have to be like the others.

Satori means creating your own life. It means waking up from group stupidity.

In a part of Manchuria, the carts are pulled by huge dogs. The driver hangs a piece of meat in front of the dog's nose, and the dog runs like crazy to try to get at it. But of course he can't. He's only thrown his meat after the cart has finally reached its destination. Then in a single gulp, he swallows it down.

It's exactly the same with people and their pay checks. Until the end of the month they run after the salary hanging in front of their noses. Once the salary is paid, they gulp it down, and they're already off: running after the next payday.

Nobody can see further than the end of their nose. Everyone believes that their life somehow has meaning, but they're really no different from swallows: the males gather food, the females sit on the eggs.

Most people aren't following any clear approach to life. They get by with makeshift methods, like rubbing lotion on a cramped shoulder.

The question is: why are you straining your forehead so much?

If you aren't careful, you'll spend your whole life doing nothing besides waiting for your ordinary-person hopes to someday be fulfilled

#### **5. To you whose life is about money, money and more money**

The measure of man: you give him a little money and immediately he starts to move.

Human happiness and unhappiness doesn't only depend on money. If the balance in your savings account were a measure of your happiness, it would be a simple matter. Yet it really isn't so.

Without money, you've got difficulties. Still, you should know that there are more important things than money.

You constantly think about sex. Still, you should know that there are more important things than sex.

Don't be so helpless that you start saying you need money to live. In this world you can lead a fine life without savings.

Even university professors are only concerned with earning their daily bread.

Nothing is more pitiful than feeding yourself with your position and salary.

“Work, work! When you work, you get money. When you have money, you can take it easy and still have something to eat.” Compared with such simplistic thinking, Marxism is truly sophisticated.

Some think they're important because they have money. Others think they're important because they have “satori”. But no matter much how much you puff up your personal sack of flesh, you won't make yourself into anything besides a devil.

That which doesn't belong to you fills the entire universe. Where personal thoughts come to an end is where the buddha-dharma begins.

In the world, it's always about winning or losing, plus or minus. Yet in Zazen, it's about nothing. It's good for nothing. That's why it is the greatest and most all-inclusive thing there is.

Dōgen says:

*The flowers that bejewel the sky of my heart,  
I offer them to the buddhas of the three worlds.*

## **6. To you who think the prime minister is a really special person.**

He who seeks his true mission won't want to pursue a career. A person who wants to become president doesn't know where he's going in life.

Their election is so important to them that presidents and congressmen campaign to rally votes. Idiots! Even if they asked me to become president, I'd turn it down: “How dumb do you think I am anyway?”

One guy loses the presidential election, so he cries. Next time around he wins the election, and then he smiles into the camera. What makes politicians different from little children anyway? It's exactly the same way with a crying child: you offer him some candy and already a smile breaks out on his teary face.

A little more maturity would be nice.

Anyone who relies on his résumé is a failure.

Once there was a megalomaniac in the Sugamo hospital who called himself “Ashiwara Shōgun”. He hung a cardboard medal around his neck and bestowed dignified words to those he met to take with them on their way. Now that the war is over, we can see clearly that what the military did wasn't at all different. And now they want to reintroduce medals yet again.

After winning the Russo-Japanese war, we thought we'd won colonies. But what really came of it? After losing the Second World War, we realized that we had only earned the hatred of the Russians.

Everyone is talking about loyalty to the fatherland. The question is simply where this loyalty will take us. I too was completely convinced when I went to war against the Russians, but

after our defeat, I realized that we had done something that we shouldn't have. In any case, it's better not to make war in the first place.

### **7. To you who would like to leave your rivals in the dust**

We often wonder who here is really better? But aren't we all made out of the same lump of clay?

Everyone should sit firmly anchored in the place where there is no better and worse.

Your whole life long you're completely out of your mind because you think it's obvious that there is a "you" and "the others". You put on an act to stand out in a crowd, but in reality there's neither "you" nor "the others".

When you die, you'll understand.

Buddha-dharma means seamlessness. What seam runs between you and me? Sooner or later we all end up acting as if a seam separates friend and foe. When we get too used to this, we believe that this seam really exists.

Poor and rich, important and unimportant – none of that exists. It's only glitter on the waves. Still there are some who curse buddha because they're stuck in unhappiness or because someone else is happier than they are.

Happiness and unhappiness, important and unimportant, love and hate – the whole world makes a big deal out of these things. The world where all of this doesn't exist: that's the world of *hishiryō*.

In the West they say, "Man is the wolf of man." The first step in religion must be that the wolves stop biting each other.

In the buddha-dharma it isn't about winning or losing, love or hate.

Some want to show off with their "satori". Yet it's clear that something which you can use to show off has nothing to do with satori.

### **8. To you who are sobbing because somebody's put one over on you**

At some point you've got to slap yourself in the face and seriously ask yourself: is your personal gain or loss really worth this overwhelming joy and suffering?

Sooner or later everyone starts thinking of nothing besides themselves. You say, "That was good!" But what was good? It was only good for you personally, that's all.

Why is it that we humans are so wiped out? It is the constant effort to gain a little advantage that wipes us out.

Illusion means being unstable. Illusion means being controlled by the situation.

A person with big desires is easily fooled. Even the greatest conman can't profit from a person with no desires.

Buddhism means no self, nothing to gain. You must be one with the universe and all living beings.

All beings are mistaken: we see as happiness that which leads to unhappiness, and weep over an unhappiness which isn't unhappiness at all. We all know the child whose tears suddenly turn into laughter when you give him a cookie. What we living beings call happiness isn't much more than that.

## **9. To you who would like to slap your boss with a letter of resignation.**

As a human being, whatever you do, you should do it in a way that can't be repeated a second time. What can be repeated is best left to the robots.

Life doesn't run on tracks.

Birds don't sing in major or minor. Bodhidharma's teaching doesn't fit on lined paper. The buddha-dharma is wide and unlimited. When you try to hold it still, you've missed it. It isn't dried cod, but a live fish. Living fish have no fixed form.

In the soldier's handbook it says that in war you must be prepared for a thousand different possibilities. That doesn't just go for war – there's no rule book for life either. When you try to live your life according to a manual, you're sure to fail.

For a court case as well, it goes without saying that you have to be on your guard when everything runs according to the book.

*The wild geese leave no traces,  
yet no matter where they fly, they never lose their way.*

There are no footprints on the way of the bird. It's not the same as a steam engine that runs on tracks or an ox's well-worn path.

Don't we live life from moment to moment? How could we possibly take life, analyze it, systematize it and file it away?

However much you accomplish in this life, you can't present any of it at the last judgement. You will die naked.

In the end, there will be nothing left for you to do besides let go.

Isn't it evident that the greatest happiness consists in doing what you have to do?

You can't depend on anything. The value of things changes. This insight is what motivated Shakyamuni to renounce his King's title, to leave his wife and son and become a monk.

## **10. To you who wants to begin with zazen**

Once there were 500 monkeys in the service of 500 Buddhist saints. One day the monkeys decided to mimic everything the saints did, so they did zazen copying the saints with their eyes, noses, mouths and whole bodies. They say that in this way a thousand saints practiced zazen and realized satori. This is why it's my wish to preserve – even if it's only through imitation – the seed of zazen.

When you practice Zen, it has to be here and now, it has to be about yourself. Don't let Zen become a rumor that has nothing to do with you.

Zazen is the buddha that we form out of our raw flesh.

Zazen means putting into practice that which cannot be thought.

Zazen is the dharma-switch that turns on the whole universe.

Simply doing something [shikan] means doing it now, on the spot. It means not wasting the little time you have in life.

When somebody asks me what zazen is good for, I say that zazen isn't good for anything at all. And then some say that in that case they'd rather stop doing zazen. But what's running around satisfying your desires good for? What is gambling good for? And dancing? What is it

good for to get worked up over winning or losing in baseball? It's all good for absolutely nothing! That's why nothing is as sensible as sitting silently in zazen. In the world, "good for nothing" just means that you can't make money out of it.

Often people ask me how many years they have to practice zazen before it shows results. Zazen has no results. You won't get anything at all out of zazen.

### **11. To you who wants to strengthen your hara with zazen**

"Through zazen you strengthen your *hara*"

Knowing that this *hara* isn't worth a damn is real *hara* and real zazen.

Some people want to strengthen their *hara* with zazen so that they will be able to scare the bill-collector away with a roar. But they don't need zazen for that, they just have to drink sake like real men.

There are books around like "Zen and the Art of Cultivating Your *Hara*". This *hara* culture is just about making yourself numb.

Some try to become thick-skinned through zazen.

Developing real *hara* means putting aside your personal attitudes.

If it's even the slightest bit personalized, it isn't pure, unadulterated zazen. We've got to practice genuine, pure zazen, without mixing it with gymnastics or satori or anything. When we bring in our personal ideas – even only a little bit – it's no longer the buddha-dharma.

In a word, Buddhism is non-self [muga]. Non-self means that "I" am not a separate subject. When "I" am not a separate subject, then I fill the entire universe. That I fill the entire universe is what's meant by "all things manifest the truth".

In true dharma there's nothing to gain. In false dharma there's something to gain.

The way of buddha means that there is nothing to seek, nothing to find [mushogu-mushotoku]. If there's something to find, no matter how much we practice, it's got nothing to do with the buddha-dharma. If there's nothing to find [mushotoku], that's the buddha-dharma.

### **12. To you who is wondering if your zazen has been good for something**

What's zazen good for? Absolutely nothing! This "good for nothing" has got to sink into your flesh and bones until you're truly practicing what's good for nothing. Until then, your zazen is really good for nothing.

You say you want to become a better person by doing zazen. Zazen isn't about learning how to be a person. Zazen is to stop being a person.

Zazen is unsatisfying. Unsatisfying for whom? For the ordinary person. People are never satisfied.

Isn't it self-evident? How could that which is eternal and infinite ever satisfy human desires?

Unsatisfying: simply practicing zazen.

Unsatisfying: realizing zazen with this body.

Unsatisfying: absorbing zazen into your flesh and blood.

Being watched by zazen, cursed by zazen, blocked by zazen, dragged around by zazen, every day crying tears of blood – isn't that the happiest form of life you can imagine?

You say “When I do zazen, I get disturbing thoughts!” Foolish! The fact is that it’s only in zazen that you’re aware of your disturbing thoughts at all. When you dance around with your disturbing thoughts, you don’t notice them at all. When a mosquito bites you during zazen, you notice it right away. But when you’re dancing and a flea bites your balls, you don’t notice it at all.

Don’t whine. Don’t stare into space. Just sit!

### **13. To you who says that you have attained a better state of mind through zazen**

As long as you say zazen is a good thing, something isn’t quite right. Unstained zazen is absolutely nothing special. It isn’t even necessary to be grateful for it.

Wouldn’t it be strange if a baby said to its mother, “Please have understanding for the fact that I’m always shitting in my diapers.”

Without knowledge, without consciousness, everything is as it should be.

Don’t stain your zazen by saying that you’ve progressed, feel better or have become more confident through zazen.

We only say, “Things are going well!” when they’re going *our* way.

We should simply leave the water of our original nature as it is. But instead we are constantly mucking about with our hands to find out how cold or warm it is. That’s why it gets cloudy.

There’s nothing more unpleasant than staining zazen. “Staining” means making a face like a department head, corporate boss or chairperson. Washing away the stains is what’s meant by “simplicity” [*shikan*].

There are bodhisattvas “without magical abilities”. These are bodhisattvas who have even entirely forgotten words like “practice” or “satori”, bodhisattvas without wonderful powers, bodhisattvas who are immeasurable, bodhisattvas who are not interested in their name and fame.

Zazen isn’t like a thermometer where the temperature slowly rises: “Just a little more ... yeah ... that’s it! Now, I’ve got satori!” Zazen never becomes anything special, no matter how long you practice. If it becomes something special, you must have a screw lose somewhere.

If we don’t watch out, we’ll start believing that the buddha-dharma is like climbing up a staircase. But it isn’t like this at all. This very step right now is the one practice which includes all practices, and it is all practices, contained in this one practice.

If you do something good, you can’t forget you’ve done something good. If you’ve had satori, you get stuck in the awareness of having satori. That’s why it’s better to keep your hands off good deeds and satori. You’ve got to be perfectly open and free. Don’t rest on your laurels!

Even if I say all of this about the buddha way, ordinary people will still use the buddha-dharma to try and enhance their value as humans.

### **14. To you who do everything you can to get satori**

We don’t practice in order to get satori. It’s satori that pulls our practice. We practice, being dragged all over by satori.

You don’t seek the way. The way seeks you.

You study, you do sports, and you’re fixated on satori and illusion. So that even zazen becomes a marathon for you, with satori as the finish line. Yet because you’re trying to grab



it, you're missing it completely.

Only when you stop meddling like this does your original, cosmic nature realize itself.

You say you're seeking the way, but what does it mean if you're seeking the way just to satisfy yourself?

You want to become a buddha? There's no need to become a buddha! Now is simply now. You are simply you. And tell me, since you want to leave the place where you are, where is it exactly you want to go?

Zazen means just sitting without even thinking of becoming buddha.

We don't achieve satori through practice: practice *is* satori. Each and every step is the goal.

### **15. To you who is showing off your satori**

Why don't you simply have "I have satori!" tattooed all over your body?

If you're not conscious of your stomach, that's proof your stomach is healthy. If you can't forget your satori, that's proof that you haven't got any.

You think that you're something special because you've got satori, but you're simply showing off your sack of flesh.

When an ordinary person has got satori, he's called a Zen-devil. This is because he thinks he's something special.

When people talk about satori, it usually just means that a devil has acquired magical powers.

When you know you're doing something bad, then it isn't so serious. But people who chat about their satori don't even realize they're doing something bad. That's why they're such helpless cases.

No illusion is as hard to cure as satori.

Don't take pride in your practice. It's clear that any satori you take pride in is a lie.

You've got it backwards if you talk about stages of practice. Practice is satori.

Satori is like a thief breaking into an empty house. He breaks in but there's nothing to steal. No reason to flee. No one who chases him. So there's nothing which could satisfy him either.

### **16. To you who are impressed by scientific and cultural progress**

We mustn't forget that today's science and culture have only developed out of the lowest levels of consciousness.

Everybody is talking about culture, but what is it besides a refinement of our illusions? However much we iron out our drives, from a Buddhist standpoint, it's got nothing to do with progress or civilization. Everyone is talking these days about progress, but I wonder in which direction we're actually progressing.

When you observe insects in a tank, you see how they bite into each other and hold on with all their might. It must be amusing to observe from another corner of the universe how humans stock up on atomic and hydrogen bombs.

Acting clever while at the same time being the biggest idiots – that's human fate.

People love it when things are complicated. Though things are complicated enough – even when we try to keep them as simple as possible – there are still some who make an effort to be especially complicated in everything they do.

The modern world musters up all of its knowledge just to run down a dead end street.

People were idiots in the old days too. They wasted a fortune in gold and manpower building castles. And what was it all for? To bicker with each other. Today, people are even dumber. They build atomic and hydrogen bombs in order to erase humanity with one push of a button. How is it that humanity itself, unlike its science, hasn't progressed in the least?

An idiot sits at the computer, a dimwit in the cockpit of the jet and a madman at the control panel of the atomic rockets – that's the current problem.

Perhaps we can save our friends with atomic and hydrogen bombs – but not our enemies. Only zazen is capable of saving friends as well as enemies.

### **17. To you who say you don't get along with others**

Everyone talks about their own point of view, but who really cares? It'd be better if you just kept your mouth shut!

Some say, "Who do you think I am anyway?" An ordinary person, what else?

Some are proud of their wealth, others of their name and position, still others of their satori. In this way they're just showing off how ordinary they are – people these days are so stupid!

People always have something they can't forget. If they're rich, they can't forget their money. If they're intelligent, they can't forget their brains. If they're talented, they always think about how good they are at this or that. But whatever it is, it always gets in the way.

It's only because we're so concerned about this sack of flesh that we think of ourselves as rich or beautiful or whatever. But when we die, everything is one. Nothing is yours anymore.

We're always trying to promote our ego. The only question is: How many years can we keep it up? When we're dead our body is just a piece of meat.

The same moon sometimes seems to smile, and sometimes seems to cry. Sometimes we simply admire it over a glass of sake. But whichever moon people look at, they only see what corresponds to their karmic perception. None of that is real.

You cry out, "Peace, peace!", but if you would only be quiet, it would be so much more peaceful. You say, "In my opinion...", but it's precisely when opinions and theories come into the picture that the bickering starts.

"Both you and me are just ordinary people." [*Prince Shōtoku, 17-Article Constitution*] Since, in any case, it's just ordinary people who wage war on each other, everybody is wrong, friend as much as foe. The winner and the loser are in any case just ordinary people.

It's so sad to watch the world's conflicts. There's such a lack of common sense. One hothead swings a sword, another fires a rifle.

### **18. To you who are complaining all the time that you haven't got any time**

People only keep themselves busy to avoid boredom.

Everybody complains that they're so busy they haven't got any time. But why are they so busy? It's only their illusions that keep them busy. A person who practices zazen has time. When you practice zazen, you have more time than anyone else in the world.

If you aren't careful, you'll start making a big fuss just to feed yourself. You're constantly in a hurry, but why? Just to feed yourself. Chickens too are in a hurry when they peck at their food. But why? Only to be eaten by humans.

How many illusions does a person create in their lifetime? It's impossible to calculate. Day in, day out, "I want this, I want that..." A single stroll in the park is accompanied by 50,000, 100,000 illusions. So that's what it means to be "busy". "I want to be with you, I want to come home, I want to see you..."

People are constantly out of breath – from running so quickly after their illusions.

You want to reach nirvana to be liberated from your present life? It is exactly that attitude which is called "transmigration".

The development of transportation has made the world smaller. Now we race around in cars, but where to anyway? To the arcade! We step on the gas, just to kill time.

### **19. To you who are tumbling down the career ladder**

When you're dead and you look back at your life, you'll see that none of this mattered in the least.

Suffering is nothing more than the suffering we create for ourselves. Some even take great pains to meticulously piece together their own suffering.

None of this matters at all. Stop blubbering! What a waste of tears.

Grow up a little and open your eyes: You'll see that you're making a great fuss over nothing. All living beings are just like crybabies making a great fuss over nothing.

The whole world makes a big deal over nothing. What's it all for? Is there really anything in the world that merits making such a weepy face?

Sometimes you hear actors in the theatre saying, "But what should I do? What should I do?" This question has never occurred to me, because I just say to myself, "None of this really matters at all!"

Fortune and misfortune, good and bad – not everything is how it looks to your eyes. It's not how you think it is either. We've got to go beyond fortune and misfortune, good and bad.

You talk about your troubles and worries, but what do your troubles and worries really consist of? Isn't it like someone who catches his own fart with his hand, smells it and bursts out saying, "Oh no, that really stinks!" The more time you have, the more time you spend with your farts. At some point, you should get to know real suffering. You want to hang or drown yourself in desperation? Come back down to earth and wake up to reality!

You suffer because you don't want to accept what has to be accepted.

Quietly accepting what has to be is what's meant by satori. Great satori means seeing necessity as necessity, for necessity is an integral part of the universe.

You're worried about death? Don't worry – you'll die for sure.

### **20. To you who like to hear ghost stories**

People often ask me if ghosts really exist. Somebody who racks their brains over something like that is what I call a ghost.

It's said that the dead appear as ghosts, but that's only true as long as you have the living. When the living are dead, they won't see any more ghosts. In Yogacara philosophy, ghosts are the tools of the living.

One person says he saw a ghost, someone else learned of somebody's death in a dream. What's all this besides individual scenes in the theatre of transmigration.

Isn't everything a hallucination? It's only because we don't recognize this hallucination as a hallucination that we wander around in life and death.

Some underpants are hanging to dry on a branch. Somebody sees them and thinks they've seen a ghost. Maybe you're thinking that something like that hardly ever happens in reality, but when we think, "I need money", "I want to become minister", "I want to get ahead" – aren't we all taking a pair of underpants for a ghost?

Everyone is talking about "reality", but this is only a dream. It's nothing more than the reality inside a dream. Good! When people are talking about revolution and war, we think that something really special is going on, but what is it besides struggling inside a dream? When you die, you recognize your dream. Someone who doesn't put an end to dreaming before then is an ordinary person.

### **21. To you who would like more money, love, status and fame**

Heaven and earth give, air gives, water gives, plants give, animals give, humans give. All things give of themselves to each other. It's only within this reciprocal giving that we can survive – regardless of whether we're thankful for it or not.

There's nothing we need to complain about.

Nobody was granted life due to their personal merit. And no one can live just by using their own strength. But nonetheless, we're all still only concerned with our own pocketbook.

Stupidity means being preoccupied with your own body.

Wisdom says, "I am what I am, no matter how things end up."

A person outside of the Way is someone who only thinks of gain and loss. A devil is someone who makes a profit off of this.

What a bore: making a long face and complaining about having no money, nothing to eat, and being stuck in debt. It's only because you believe that you have the right to revel in life and always feel good that you moan and groan about your poverty.

Once during the war, I visited a coal mine. With the same outfit and head-lamp as the miners, I got into the lift and down we went. At one point when we were going down it seemed to me as if suddenly we were going up again. But when I looked with the lamp at the wall of the shaft, I saw that we were still going down. In the beginning when we were accelerating downwards, we could really feel that we were going downwards. Just when the velocity changed it seemed to us as if we were going up again. In exactly the same way, when we think about our lives, we always go wrong when we mistake the fluctuating amounts for the sum.

Losing is satori. Winning is illusion.

Not coveting a single thing is the greatest gift you can give to the universe.

### **22. To you who wish you could lead a happier life**

“Rest awhile and everything will be fine.”

We simply need to take a short break. Being buddha means taking a short break from being a human. Being buddha doesn't mean working your way up as a human.

What makes Ryōkan so refreshing is that he doesn't fondle things.

In everything, people follow their feelings of joy, anger, sadness and comfort. But that's something different from everyday mind. Everyday mind means cease-fire. Without preferences, without animosity, without winner and loser, without good and evil, without joy and pain – that's everyday mind.

“What sort of person stands on the ground where there's neither coming nor going?”

Kyūhō answered, “The stone sheep versus the stone tiger: sooner or later they'll get tired of staring each other in the eyes.” The stone sheep won't flinch. The stone tiger won't jump out of hunger. That's the point – encountering things beyond thinking.

What do we have when we truly have a grip on things as they are? Beyond-thinking [*hishiryō*]. Beyond-thinking doesn't allow itself to be thought. No matter if you think so or not: things are simply as they are.

“All things are empty” means there's nothing we can run into, because nothing is really happening. We only think something's happening because we are intoxicated by something.

Nothing is ever happening, no matter what seems to be going on – that's the natural condition. Illusion means losing this natural condition. Normally we don't recognize this natural condition. Normally we cover it with something else, so it's not natural anymore.

The buddha-dharma means the normal condition. Yet in the world everything is unnatural. Domineering, succumbing and discussing everything to death are unnatural.

Each place fills heaven and earth, every instant is eternal.

To practice the way of Buddha means to completely live out this present moment – which is our whole life – here and now.

Don't squeeze the way of Buddha into any frame.

### **23. To you who say that doctors and monks have it good**

Ōtani Kubutsu was known during the Taishō Period because he once gave a geisha a 10,000 yen tip. On top of that, he wrote a haiku too: “How wasteful my life compared to the 90 years the patriarch was clothed in paper”

It's a good haiku, but is it what we expect from someone who gives a 10,000 yen tip to a geisha?

Kinkaku-ji as well as the golden hall in Hōryū-ji are not intended for the practice of monks. In places like these, monks can earn their keep by just hanging around.

For what were Tōdai-ji and Hōryū-ji and all the other temples built? In the end, only to stable good for nothing monks. It's no surprise then, when there are monks who set Kinkaku-ji or Enryaku-ji on fire. The same goes for Ginkaku-ji as well.

In the first year of the Meiji Era, the five-story pagoda of Hōryū-ji was up for sale for 50 yen, and it still found no potential buyers. They did find somebody to buy the five-story pagoda of Kōfuku-ji for 30 yen, but he only wanted to burn it down to gather up the gold afterwards.

When they said to him, “If you do that, the whole town of Nara will go up in flames!” he said,

“Alright, to hell with it!” This is the only reason the pagoda has survived to this day. The market value of things like these changes. There’s nothing great about things whose market value change. We could also do without them. There are more important things. Zazen is what matters.

Out-dated views – what adults teach children are often nothing more than out-dated views. The view that good is good and bad is bad has already had its best days. Even a vegetable which was once good is inedible once it’s past its prime.

We’ve got to always be able to see things from a fresh perspective. You say, “That’s important.” But what’s important? There’s nothing that’s so important. When we die we’ve got to leave everything behind anyway. The cultural goods and national treasures in Nara or Kyōto will sooner or later disappear, so we could actually set them on fire right now!

Recently there are temples in Kyōto that run hotels or boarding houses. It’s strange how some people can’t think of anything besides money and food.

A home-leaving monk means someone who completely lets go. It means letting go of group stupidity. Today’s monks only want to cling to things. That’s why they’re good for nothing.

When you feed a cat treats, it stops hunting mice. And a spoiled dog keeps no watch. Even humans aren’t any good for work when they’ve got money and can take it easy.

#### **24. To you who say that monks run an easy business**

It’d be funny if ghosts did their haunting whenever the monks botched up a funeral. But even when the monks botch a funeral, the ghosts don’t do anything. That’s why the monk’s life floats in limbo.

What are the monks doing anyway when they hold a funeral? It seems to me like someone who shoots blanks, films it and then takes a photo of the film.

Even radio and television don’t transmit images or sound when they aren’t connected properly. How unfair it is that monks, on the other hand, have it so easy. I don’t see anything besides monks whose robes are a mess and don’t even know how to sit zazen or go begging.

Monks desperately try to get by through paying lip service to the Buddha’s teaching. And lay people hope to get something out of it when they have monks pay lip service. How could this have anything to do with the Buddha’s teaching, earning your living with memorized lip service?

Monks like to talk about the old women who they read their sutras for: “The granny over there is seeking refuge in me.” Don’t say it so lightly – idiots should keep their mouths shut!

Today’s monks say zazen isn’t in demand anymore. They say, Sawaki is out of touch with the times.

There is a bad deed, called “doing good”. For some, doing good is just a decoration.

When something concerns the teaching, and at the same time it’s also a matter of expanding the business, somebody or another must have gotten something mixed up.

When a throng of Zen monks in the main temples read half of the Shōdōka quickly and loudly, the pilgrims are overcome with awe. I’ve got no idea what’s so awe-inspiring about that, but somehow everyone is overcome with awe. Monks only gather together because they want to have their license, and the main temples do business by accumulating such monks.

The same is true even for the temples in China. That's how they do business – without recognizing business as business.

The Buddha's teaching has declined these days because practice has declined. People just can't get it into their guts that practice itself is awakening.

Why is Japanese Buddhism worthless? Because in Japan you'll find the largest number of Buddhist treasures, just no practice. And where there's no practice, there's no buddha-dharma. Even if the seed of Buddha's teaching is there, it can't begin to function as long as it isn't brought to sprout through practice.

They say that Buddhism in Thailand, Burma, Ceylon and China strictly keeps to the rules and precepts. Still the Buddhist teaching there is exactly as hollow as in Japanese Buddhism. Only the customs are different: Hinayana customs.

### **25. To you who want to study a little Buddhism to improve yourself**

“Empty theories” is what we call it when bystanders play around with terminology. Playing around like that is good for nothing. Dive in with body and soul!

You've got to die completely in order to be able to reflect on the buddha-dharma. It isn't enough to torture yourself and only die halfway.

The buddha-dharma is nothing for spectators. It's about you.

Religion doesn't mean changing the world around myself. It means changing my eyes, my ears, my way of seeing and my head.

The buddha-dharma isn't a subject to be studied. The real question is: “What am I doing with my body?” The human body is set-up very practically. But what do we use this practical body for anyway? Usually, we use it as a slave to our illusions. The buddha-dharma means using the body in a way that doesn't make it a slave of our illusions. That means putting body and mind in order.

The buddha-dharma isn't an idea. It's about the problem, “How do I deal with myself?”

### **26. To you who like hearing something inspirational about Buddhism**

They say, “When I hear Sawaki talk, my faith cools down.” Now I'm going to really put their faith on ice: This sort of faith is nothing but superstition.

They say, “Sawaki's talks don't awaken any faith in me.” They don't awaken any superstition, that's all.

There's nothing more funny than old women looking for “inspiration”. Everything for them is “inspirational” even if it's only worth as much as pigeon shit. Anyway, this idea of inspiration is mistaken: isn't it just personal inspiration they're talking about? They're only taking refuge in Buddha because they hope to get something out of it.

Whatever sutra you read, it's always about devoting your body and life to the Way. Why is it that the whole world believes religion means praying to Buddha for good health and good business?

However much good they do, everything that humans do is bad. If you give, all day long you think, “I gave!” If you do religious practice, you think “I practiced, I practiced!” If you do something good, you never forget, “I did good, I did good!” Does this mean that we should do

something bad instead? No, even when we do good, it's bad. When we do something bad, it's even worse.

If you do good, you start to work yourself up about everything bad you suddenly see in others. When you have done something bad, you're quiet, because your own ass itches. People don't only calculate when it's a matter of money. In everything they do they try to bargain up or down. That's because their body and mind haven't dropped off. Only when body and mind have dropped off does this business not count any more. Dropping off body and mind means immeasurability, limitlessness.

"Do good, leave the bad." There's no doubt about that, but is it so clear what's good and what's bad? Good and bad go hand-in-hand.

Zazen is beyond good and evil. It's not moral education. Zazen takes place where Communism *and* Capitalism finish.

### **27. To you who naively starts wondering about your true self**

You can't hold on to your self. The very moment you give your self up, you realize the self which is one with the universe.

Precisely that self which I haven't thought up is who I really am.

The two passages, "all things are the form of truth" (Lotus Sutra) and "all existence is Buddha nature" (Nirvana Sutra) refer to that which lies beyond the personal.

The entire universe radiates the light of the self.

So I fill the entire universe. I'm not that fool playing with his pocket change.

This body is the whole universe. If you don't have that kind of faith in yourself, you'll have a weak point you won't be able to hide. As soon as you get jealous or moody, you'll show it.

Just forget everything you've picked up since you were born.

When a drop of water enters the sea, and when a speck of dust settles on the ground, then that drop is already the sea, and that speck of dust is already the earth.

All things are contained in my self. That's why, in my actions, I also have to pay attention to what other's expect.

It is because we are grateful towards society that whenever we use something, we think of those who will need it after us.

### **28. To you who thinks Buddhism is the greatest idea in human history**

Ideas are based on how things would stand if everything were already settled. The buddha-dharma is about that which hasn't settled yet. Things are still in motion.

Religion isn't an idea. It's practice.

Religious practice can be called a "fact". That means it's a matter of fact. It's not some medicine that promises relief.

What an experiment is for scientists is what real practice is for us. In the same way that science is meaningless without experiments, Buddhism is meaningless without practice.

Don't get lost in thoughts about the buddha-dharma.

Be careful that you don't handle the buddha-dharma like some canned good which has nothing to do with reality.



Your explanations and your anecdotes are foolish like everything that comes out of your mouth. The expression on your face has already said how it really is.

You can express reality completely freely with words. Yet these words are not in themselves reality. If reality were in the words themselves, we would burn our tongue whenever we said “fire”. And whenever we talked about wine, we would get drunk. In reality, it isn’t so easy.

What isn’t real is useless, no matter what we call it. And no matter how we use theories, we don’t make any progress through them. Words are nothing more than words.

### **29. To you who are pleased when someone compliments the depth of your faith**

Many confuse faith with a type of intoxication. There’s a type of intoxication similar to awe that’s nothing but delusion. Faith means, however, just the opposite – complete sobriety from any form of intoxication.

When most people in the world talk about the mind of faith, they don’t think it’s anything more than kissing Buddha’s ass.

“Do what you like with the others, but at least give me a first-class ticket to paradise!” Prayers like that have got nothing to do with the mind of faith.

Faith means clarity and purity. Mind means the single mind that encompasses the three worlds. So having faith means clarifying and purifying the one mind of the three worlds. The mind of faith means truly becoming clear about your own mind.

Faith means being clear and pure. It means being at ease. But some people get confused about this as well and think faith is about getting worked up, so they try with all their might to do so. Until they realize that it’s not so easy to get truly worked-up. Then they just act as if they were.

Everyone wants to go to paradise, but have you ever really seen it? If you think you have, you must have been mistaken.

When some new religious group starts picking up huge numbers of followers, suddenly everybody thinks there must be something true about it.

The number of followers doesn’t determine if a religion is good. If it were simply a matter of who had the largest numbers, doesn’t the club of ordinary people have the most members? No, it’s the bacteria. There’s even more of them!

Aren’t a huge pile of crazy ideas dumped on us humans, ideas that go by the names of “faith”, “satori” and so on?

### **30. To you who say that the Shōbōgenzō is difficult to understand**

Because you want to understand Buddhist teaching from the standpoint of human thought, you are going 180° in the wrong direction.

Master Dōgen doesn’t expect anything from us that’s not humanly possible. It’s simply a matter of becoming natural, without empty thoughts or peculiarities. Buddhism in general doesn’t demand anything special from us, only that we become natural.

Some verses in the sutras might seem special to us, for example, “The white hair between his eyebrows illuminates the 3,000 worlds.” But that’s only a literary symbol for the samadhi that is the king of all samadhis.

Master Dōgen’s whole life was one uncompromising, penetrating inquiry into himself.

There's no buddha outside of practice, and no teaching except for beyond-thinking – those are Master Dōgen's essential principles.

Something that is fascinating about Dōgen Zenji is how he saw the buddha-dharma as the self, instead of simply putting out fairy tales for ordinary people. For example, he talks about the vehicle of the single Buddha: Amithaba, Shakyamuni and ourselves as one buddha. And for him, the practice of zazen itself is spreading the buddha-dharma – not building temple halls or pagodas. Dōgen Zenji's zazen is a completely transparent zazen. It's of no use to ordinary people.

*Don't practice the buddha-dharma for yourself. Don't practice to make a name for yourself. Don't practice to profit from it. Don't practice to have spiritual experiences. Only practice the buddha-dharma for the sake of the buddha-dharma.* [Dōgen Zenji: *Gakudōyōjinshū*] That's his buddha-dharma.

Master Dōgen “returned with empty hands” [*Eihei Kōroku*]. When he came back from Japan, he didn't show off some satori the way others show off their tattoos. The story of his empty-handed return completely relaxes our hold on any sort of fixed idea like achieving satori through zazen.

A Christian asked me once, “My priest has said that no religion has spread so many lies as Buddhism. Is that really true?” I answered, “Now you've hit the nail right on the head, my friend!” The Lotus Sutra as well as The Garland Sutra and the Shōbōgenzō are nothing but lies – when they're not put into practice. Without zazen, Buddhism is a total lie.

### **31. To you who say that Buddhism doesn't have anything to do with you**

In prison, the prisoners puff themselves up in front of the guards and say, “Take a good look at yourselves. Without us you wouldn't have anything to eat!”

That's exactly how it is with us ordinary people. Because we exist, the buddhas exist. Without us ordinary people, the buddhas would have been out of work long ago.

In this sense ordinary people and buddhas aren't separate beings, but stand in interrelation to each other.

A bodhisattva is someone who awakens suffering beings. He's an ordinary person who has the goal “buddha” clearly and decidedly in sight.

When you talk about Buddha, you're thinking of something far away that's got nothing to do with you, and that's why you're only running around in circles.

Ordinary people and buddhas have the same form. Awakening and illusion have the same form.

When we practice the buddha-dharma, we are buddha. Or better yet, it is precisely because we are buddha already that we can practice the buddha-dharma.

You believe that Buddhism is a little different from everything else. But it's not like that at all: Buddhism is each and every thing. “Each and every thing is my child.” That's how the buddha-dharma sees the world.

When adults are only adults, children don't grow up. When children cry, you've got to cry with them. Adults have to be children, children have to be adults. Between buddhas and ordinary people, the buddha-dharma and the social world, satori and illusion, ascending and descending, wisdom and compassion – there's got to be a lively exchange among all of these.

### **32. To you who say that your body, just as it is, is already Buddha**

Ishigawa Gozaemon said, “Even once I have disappeared and all sand has washed into the sea, the seeds of thievery in the world will never be exhausted.” This is how he sings the praises of that “thief-nature” that penetrates heaven and earth. And yet, as long as we don’t act like Gozaemon we won’t become thieves.

It’s also said that all things have buddha-nature, and that it completely penetrates heaven and earth. But as long as we don’t act like a buddha, we don’t become buddhas.

When you, inseparable from Buddha, put Buddha’s activity into practice – only then are you a buddha. And when you act like a fool, then you’re a fool.

It’s only in your approach to life that Buddha appears.

A person who puts a buddha’s actions into practice is called a buddha.

Any buddha that humans have thought up isn’t a buddha.

When we say Buddha is unlimited it means that he’s beyond any fixed form. It isn’t a measurement of his size.

Buddha is sharp-witted, cheerful and free of attachment. Nevertheless, lots of people these days think that Buddha is dreary and unlucky.

### **33. To you who are out of your mind trying so hard to attain peace of mind**

The buddha-dharma is immeasurable and unlimited. How could it ever have been made to fit into your categories.

No matter what you are grasping for, it’s limited.

In any case, only things for ordinary people can be grasped. Grasping for money, clinging to health, being attached to position and title, grasping for satori – everything you grasp only becomes the property of an ordinary person. Letting go of ordinary people’s property – that’s what it means to be a buddha.

When peace of mind only means your personal satisfaction, then it’s got nothing to do with the buddha-dharma.

The buddha-dharma teaches limitlessness. That which is measureless has to be accepted without complaint.

You lack peace of mind because you’re running after an idea of total peace of mind. That’s backwards. Be attentive to your mind in each moment, no matter how unpeaceful it might seem to be. Great peace of mind is realized only in the practice within this unpeaceful mind. It arises out of the interplay between peaceful and unpeaceful mind.

A peace of mind that is totally at peace would be nothing more than something ready made. Real peace of mind only exists within unpeaceful mind.

When dissatisfaction is finally accepted as dissatisfaction, peace of mind reigns. It’s the mind of a person who had been deaf to criticism when he finally listens to others talking about his mistakes. It’s the mind of a person who, naked and begging for his life, suddenly dies peacefully. It’s the mind of a person who has suddenly lost the beggar who had been pulling at his sleeve, relentlessly following him around everywhere,. It’s the mind after the flood in which the make-up of piety has washed away.

How could a human being ever have peace of mind? The real question is what you're doing with this human life. What you're doing with this stinking sack of flesh, that's the issue.

### **34. To you who are aiming at the ultimate way of life**

It has to be exactly as it is, yet it can be any which way. Nothing has to be done in any particular way, yet it has to be done in the highest and best way.

Sen no Rikyū once hired a carpenter to drive a nail into a pillar. After considering it thoroughly, he decided on the exact point. The carpenter made a little mark and then took a break. When he finally got around to actually hammering the nail in, he couldn't find his mark anymore. Sen no Rikyū reconsidered the matter and eventually called out, "Here, here's a good place!" When they looked at it closely, it was clear that it was exactly the same spot where the carpenter had made his mark before.

In the middle of pure formlessness, there is an ultimate direction. In the same way there is an ultimate facial expression among a person's facial expressions.

What's called "having magical powers" doesn't mean anything more than having a facial expression that isn't muddled.

We think that we're constantly misled by our deluded feelings and that nothing can be done about it. We think that there's a push and pull between the Buddha's teaching and our foolish feelings. But that's backwards.

The buddha-dharma says that we aren't at all different from Buddha. All things manifest the truth. What you learn in the buddha-dharma are the basics of practice.

Practice means asking with your whole being the question, "What can I do right now for the Buddha Way?"

Even in the case of putting down a teacup it makes a big difference if you simply let it fall or if you lower it carefully with your hand.

The basis of all actions is to follow through to the end. If your mind is absent even just for a moment, you're no different from a corpse.

It's all about finding the correct tension for your muscles and tendons. It's about becoming a person without gaps, about developing the proper tension and placement of muscles and tendons.

What's the buddha-dharma about? It's about having every aspect of your daily life pulled by Buddha.

It isn't enough to hit the bull's eye once. Last's years perfect marks are useless. You've got to hit the bull's eye right now.

by Uchiyama Kōshō



More than twenty years have gone by since the death of Sawaki Rōshi, a leading figure in the world of Zen who was active from the twenties to 1965. Even today, the immense influence that he has had on our society can be felt. Yet the conditions he was born into were unimaginably difficult and impoverished.

He was born in 1880 in Mie Prefecture. Japan was in the process of reforming itself politically and the new nation still lacked a stable foundation. In those uncertain times, when he was only four years old, his mother passed away, and when he was seven he experienced the sudden death of his father. The four brothers and sisters were divided among the families of relatives or became servants. Sawaki Rōshi, who was called Saikichi as a child, went to an uncle's home. This uncle though also passed away a half-year later, and he was adopted by Sawaki Bunkichi, who officially operated a paper lantern business in the town of Isshinden, but in reality made his money through gambling.

This is where Saikichi spent his four years of primary school. As he started late, he did not finish until he was twelve. The boy worked as an errand boy for his step-parents. He learned about the world of gambling by selling rice cakes in the casinos and keeping an eye on the guest's sandals. Once he witnessed how a fifty-year old man, who had hired an eighteen-year old prostitute, died from a heart attack, and how his wife came in the next morning crying, "Even in death he has to make things difficult for me – and in a place like this!"

So Saikichi as a young boy had already experienced what happens behind the curtains of our complicated world. Shortly after having finished primary school, a bloody dispute took place between roughly seventy gangsters fighting over the borders of their territories. In the evening, Saikichi's step-father was faced with the unthankful job of establishing contact between the fleeing gangsters. Shaking with fear, he was unable to fulfill his mission. In his place, Saikichi volunteered. In the middle of the night, in a terrible rain, he crossed the scene of the bloody battle and reestablished contact between the gangsters who were already 10 km away. From that night on, his step-father began to fear him and stopped beating him.

Though Sawaki Rōshi spent his childhood years in such a milieu he also had other role models. There was the Morita family, who were scraping out a living in a run-down backhouse. The father glued calligraphy rolls while the son studied traditional Japanese

painting. Saikichi felt drawn to this family, whose life, although it took place in the most impoverished conditions, had something very pure about it.

So he began to come and go at the Morita home. He studied old Chinese and Japanese history and literature from the father of the Morita family. Moreover, he learned the truth that there are things in life more important than money, position and fame. Later, Sawaki Rōshi himself said that this was how the bud formed, out of which the fruit of his later life ripened.

After finishing primary school, Saikichi took over the paper lantern business, which was how he fed his hedonistic adoptive parents (his step-mother had been a prostitute). Yet gradually he was beginning to open his eyes to his own life. He began to wonder if it was right to live his life like that and later only marry and feed a wife and children. He didn't know up from down, but his mind clearly yearned for the way.

When he ran away for the first time, Saikichi ended up at the home of an acquaintance in Ōsaka. Yet this escape was unsuccessful: his adoptive parents picked him up again. The next time, he was determined to run so far away that no one would ever be able to catch him again.

As a 16-year old, with three kilos of rice on his shoulders and 27 Sen in his pocket, he marched with the light of a single lantern to Eihei-ji temple in Echizen, constantly chewing on the raw rice throughout the long journey. Eihei-ji could not be bothered with the runaway and Saikichi was refused entry. For two days and two nights, he waited without food or water in front of the gate in the hope that his request would be heard: "Please ordain me as a monk or let me die here before the gates of Eihei-ji." In the end he was taken in as an assistant in Eihei-ji's workshop. Later he helped out at Ryūun-ji, the temple of a leading priest of Eihei-ji.

At one point he had a day off and decided to do zazen in his own room. By chance, an old parishioner who helped out at the temple entered the room and bowed towards him respectfully as if he were the Buddha himself. This old woman usually just ordered him around like an errand boy, so what was it that moved her to bow towards him with such respect? This was the first time that Sawaki Rōshi realized what noble dignity was inherent in the zazen posture, and he resolved to practice zazen for the rest of his life. In his old age, Sawaki Rōshi often said that he was a man who had wasted his entire life with zazen. The point of departure for this way of life lay in this early event.

Due to various circumstances, his wish to become monk was finally granted and he was ordained in Shōshin-ji in distant Kyūshū. At the age of 19, he entered Entsu-ji in Tanba as a wandering Zen monk [unsui] but only stayed a fortnight. From there, he was sent to another temple in which he met Fueoka Ryūun Rōshi. They understood each other well, and Sawaki resolved to follow Fueoka.

Fueoka Rōshi had studied for years under Nishiari Bokuzan Zenji, a great Zen master of the Meiji Era (1868 to 1912), and the longer they were together, the more Sawaki Rōshi was attracted to his straightforward character. Sawaki Rōshi heard lectures from Fueoka Rōshi on Gakudōyōjinshū, Eiheishingi and Zazenyōjinki, which formed the basis of his later practice of shikantaza.

Following that, Sawaki was drafted as a soldier in the Japanese-Russian War (which broke out in 1904) and earned a golden medal. At the age of 26, in the year 1906, he returned to Japan. After the war – rather late for his age – he entered the Academy for Buddhist studies in his home town. After which he transferred to the seminar of Hōryū-ji in Nara where he studied Yogacara philosophy under the abbot Saeki Jōin Sōjō.

At the age of 34, after having obtained this overview of Buddhist teaching, he began to practice *zazen* alone from morning until night at Jōfuku-ji, an empty temple in Nara. Here *shikantaza* penetrated his flesh and blood. In 1916, when he was 36, Oka Sōtan Rōshi, recruited him as a teacher for the monks in Daiji-ji in Higo. After Oka Rōshi's death, Sawaki Rōshi lived alone on Mannichi Mountain in Kumamoto and with this as his base, he began to travel to all parts of Japan to give instruction on *zazen* and hold lectures. When he was 55, he was appointed professor at Komazawa University. At the same time he became *godō* (a head teacher) at Sōji-ji, one of the two main temples of the Sōtō school. This began the period of Sawaki Rōshi's greatest activity.

At that time, "Zen" didn't mean much more than the *kōan* Zen of the Rinzai School, but Sawaki Rōshi concentrated entirely on *shikantaza* as it had been taught by Dōgen Zenji. Looking at the history of Japanese Buddhism, it cannot be overlooked that Sawaki Rōshi was the first in our era to reintroduce *shikantaza* in its pure form and revive it as being equally valid as *kōan* Zen.

Because he never lived in his own temple and also did not write any books, people began to name him, "Homeless Kōdō". Yet in 1963 he lost the strength in his legs and he had to give up traveling. He retired to Antai-ji where he died in 1965 at the age of 85.

For those who seek more information about Sawaki Rōshi's life, there are several Japanese biographies. Here I have only brought together a few snapshots out of his life to give a rough picture to those who know nothing of him. These snapshots present the character of his adoptive step-father and the Morita family, his *zazen* experience in Ryūun-ji and his encounter with Fueoka Rōshi – in short, the seed and bud out of which Sawaki Rōshi's life blossomed.