

September 2020

Greetings,

I hope this email finds everyone doing well. I have been keeping busy with the garden and all kinds of odds and ends. The Saturday morning virtual meditation group is going quite well. If you would like to join, please let me know.

I would like to reprint two articles from last month's Serene Deflection Association Newsletter. One is by Rev Master Koshin Schomberg and the other is by me. It seems they were very helpful.

I would also like to mention again during these rough times that it is important to be very mindful of anger and hate. They are a major obstacle to our spiritual life. We want to catch them when they come up and allow them to dissipate and be converted by the pure love and compassionate flow of the Eternal. Anger and hate can be very convincing and powerful. They are like heroin. When they arise, LET THEM GO. You will be thankful and grateful.

With all my heart,
Rev Basil

The Less Obvious Buddhas **Rev. Master Koshin Schomberg** [North Cascades Buddhist Priory](#)

Rev. Master Jiyu sometimes pointed out, "There is the Buddha who shows us what to do, and there is the Buddha who shows us what not to do. Both are Buddhas."

All beings possess the Buddha Nature. In that sense, all are Buddhas. So we are surrounded by Buddhas. Why should we not learn from all the Buddhas around us?

Most of the Buddhas around us are not as enlightened as Shakyamuni Buddha or Rev. Master Jiyu. Yet, if we look at others with humility and an open heart, we can see the signs of enlightenment in the daily lives and actions of many people: simple acts of gratitude and respect; kind words; generosity. These are ordinary people, like you and me—people who hold up a mirror within which we can see our own potential to act in enlightened ways.

Then there are the less obvious Buddhas who provide examples of callous ambition, pride, meanness of spirit, envy, hatred, cruelty, and lust. Like the more obvious Buddhas, these people hold up a mirror within which we can see our own potential—but in the case of the less obvious Buddhas, what we see in the mirror is our potential to act in coarse, selfish, unkind ways.

It can be difficult to avoid recoiling in disgust—even hatred—when we look in the mirror held up by some less obvious Buddhas. I would like to suggest that we can replace this kind of reaction with a bow.

The bow is just a bow. It does not constitute either approval or disapproval. It transcends all opposites. We do not have to like what we are bowing to; we do not have

to understand it. But when we bow to it, we are accepting it as it is and allowing it to teach us—and leaving everything else to the law of karma and the Compassion of the Eternal.

Each human being has some very dark things in his or her karmic history—a history going back into the remote past, far beyond this present lifetime. When we look in the mirror held up by the less obvious Buddhas, we are seeing not only our own potential for future error, but the same basic ignorance that lies in our own karmic past. And when we look in that mirror and respond with a bow, we are allowing the Compassion of the Eternal to flow to our own deep spiritual need.

Of course, people are complex. In one moment, a person may show the signs of enlightenment; and then, in the very next moment, the same person may act in what seems to be a very unenlightened way. In both moments, that person is a Buddha who is providing teaching.

It may be that a less obvious Buddha has to go to jail or be voted out of office for his own good and for the good of others. That does not mean that I, a Buddhist trainee, cannot learn from that person and bow to him or her. If in some way it is good for me to stand against a less obvious Buddha, it will also be good for me to stand against those who would seek vengeance upon that less obvious Buddha. Again, I can bow and place my trust solidly in the law of karma and the Compassion of the Eternal.

There is no less obvious Buddha who does not have the potential to become a more obvious Buddha one day. For everyone has the capacity to learn from his or her mistakes. And sometimes very big mistakes lead to very big acts of sange (contrition) and very genuine spiritual conversions.

Finally, we can offer merit both for the more obvious Buddhas and for the less obvious Buddhas. We do not have to worry about how that merit will be used—the Eternal will use it solely for good.

Training Oneself
Rev. Master Basil Singer
[Seattle Dharma Refuge](#)

When one studies Buddhism, one studies oneself;
When one studies oneself, one forgets oneself;
When one forgets oneself one is enlightened by everything.
—[Genjo-koan](#)

This teaching by Great Master Dogen was inscribed on a plaque that was in my room at North Cascades Buddhist Priory for many years. I often found myself gazing at it, and reflecting on its deeper meaning. I would like to share some of what this teaching means for me.

In this teaching the word “studies” is used. Instead of studies in the conventional sense, the way we use it in school, what I saw my meditation and training teaching me to do

was to observe and be mindful of my actions of body, speech, and mind. When I started training and meditating, I began to more clearly see aspects of myself that were causing suffering for myself and others. I started to see things that blocked the magnificent flow of the Eternal, things that pulled me away from the peace and stillness that the meditation and training brings.

I realized that I was often quite judgmental of myself and others. I saw myself going with cynicism and skepticism, enveloping myself in spiritual darkness. I saw myself being greedy and going with things that caused me trouble. I also saw myself being closed-minded in many areas of training and not willing to try things that would open my heart. I was often very down on myself, which was really just my ego assuring me that I was an especially bad trainee so why bother working on myself? But with time, as I reflected on this teaching, instead of being down on myself I worked on changing myself.

Another word that Dogen uses is “forgets.” In my experience, this means to mindfully and compassionately let go of the aspects of myself that I realize are obstacles to my practice. Some of these aspects have a lot of powerful karmic energy, but that energy can be converted. By paying attention to our actions of body, speech, and mind that cause suffering for ourselves and others and not running with them, we “forget” our egocentric self and open our hearts to all that is not ourselves. And that opening of our heart is a great liberation from the selfish self.

In the last line of the teaching Great Master Dogen says that when we “forget”— let go— of our selfish self, we are “enlightened by everything.” What this means to me is that when you do this you are able to see the flow of the Eternal in everything, and you can use everything to bring you back to living in the flow. I have said many times this is not easy. It takes a willingness and wanting to change. It takes patience and ongoing mindfulness. I have found for myself, and have seen in many others, this is a great way to live: to live in peace no matter what is going on. My gratitude is endless.
