

“Taking Care of Karma” Class 6 Supplement

From *Karma* by Traleg Kyabgon:

Buddha continually employed the example of seedlings in his discourses, a very ancient analogy, perhaps because of its great similitude to the fluid characteristics of karmic cause and effect. There are other analogies, but none as fitting. First, the right environment has to be present for a seed to sprout—the right amount of moisture, sun, soil conditions, and so on—and yet even then its germination cannot be accurately determined, nor can the duration of the event. And it is possible that the seed will produce no effect whatsoever—the sprout may not manifest even after the seed is sown in a seemingly perfect environment and tended with the greatest care. There are all kinds of variables in the analogy, which point to karma’s not being a one-to-one mechanical kind of operation...

From Fukanzazengi: Dogen's Universal Recommendation for Zazen – Talk 3 June 11, 1979 Dharma Talk by Dainin Katagiri Roshi:

10:27

There are many types of zazen in this world, but broadly speaking, let me say there are maybe three types of zazen.

One type of zazen is that by zazen we try to remove weeds on the ground, and reach certain stages of “no weeds” perfectly. By this zazen, we struggle at any cost to weed out and make the whole world perfectly clean. But that is nothing but resting weeds. Resting weeds are temporary, for a certain period of time. Someday the weeds come back up, because you cannot destroy weeds. Weeds are nothing but being, just like your existence. Weeds, flowers – beautiful flowers, ugly flowers, many kinds of flowers – as long as flowers exist in this world, immediately there are weeds.

But in the dualistic world, we don’t like weeds. So, with hatred, we try to cut them down. While you maintain hatred, by that hatred maybe you can cut them down, but it is not completely removing the weeds from the human world. Sometime, somewhere, the weeds come up.

We can see this kind of practice in the human world – for instance, within business circles. If you want to learn a business – restaurant or whatever – you have to develop business. You want to be successful in running the business, so usually we really struggle toward being successful in the business, in the common sense. [Stumbling along,] removing the weeds and gaining the flowers; in order to be successful in the business, we struggle for our lives, and reach the other shore. We can do this. If you struggle with wholeheartedness, with your effort, you can do anything. If you risk your life, you can do anything. You can reach the other shore.

But if you reach the other shore, that is [not] the final goal, because the other shore is also a part of transiency. So the goal you have reached is no longer the goal. Immediately, you have to go back to the first step, you have to do something from now. Do you understand? This is very clear; this is human life, we do this. Immediately your goal goes far from you; that’s why the

moment that you reach the goal, immediately you don't feel satisfied; that's why you want to do something more. So that desire is endless, just like snowballing. And then finally, we have to die. Death waits for you. That's all. This [way] is very common, very common. But I don't know whether it is a real way or not.

That is one type of zazen. If you do zazen like this, of course you can attain [enlightenment](#). You can completely "weed out." By arranging your physical conditions, and concentrating your breath, and adjusting or arranging your breath, taking care of your breath, you can reach a certain spiritual stage which is called calmness or tranquility, which enables you to feel happy, et cetera.

But, when the circumstances are changed, you cannot maintain the calmness and tranquility that you have experienced. Immediately it's gone; so you are very much confused. I know several examples of this in the United States. At a certain stage, under certain circumstances, for instance if you are right in the middle of a monastery in Burma, you can follow the rules, the strict practice, and you attain enlightenment. But when you come to the United States – it is a completely different situation, okay? A very different situation. And then, the weeds come back. It's really so.

Well, I don't mean it is good or bad, right or wrong. We should know that such is life, such are human beings.

19:15

And the second type of zazen is, that we remove the roots of the weeds and even the seeds from the ground. Weeds no longer grow. They are completely free from the [samsaric](#) world in the [Six Realms of Existence](#): hell, hungry ghost, fighting spirit, animal spirit, human beings, heavenly beings. But unfortunately, we weed out perfectly only on the ground of *our own property*, and we cherish a feeling of having reached the final goal. In other words, by way of having done our final goal, we spent our whole life without considering others' life.

By the practice of zazen, it's possible to weed out even the seeds completely, and the weeds no longer grow. Some [Buddhism](#) says that means that if you attain [enlightenment](#), which is the highest level of spiritual life, then at that time it's not necessary to come back to the human world. You can stay constantly in heaven. [Arhats](#) and many saints in the history of Buddhism showed us this, they experienced it. That's why one of the four results of Buddhist practice, what the arhat does, is the highest spirit of spiritual life, which enables you never to come back to [being a] human being, the samsaric world. This is arhat practice.

This is also zazen. You can do this. But that is just weeding out on their own territory; that's all. And then, when they completely weed out on their territory, they don't know what to do. So there is only death to wait for; that's all. All they have to do is just to wait for their death. Can you imagine this? If the people don't offer them food, they can survive, because they can stop their breath for many hours. Yes, they can do that. Still there is a possibility to survive; so, it's

not necessary to struggle for their life, just be there. No more weeds come up. Very clean. But they don't know what to do. Just wait for their death; that's all.

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29:00

The last type of zazen is something *we* do: *shikantaza*.

Struggling for reaching the other shore at any cost: this is also distraction. Even though you reach the highest level of spiritual life, still there is a struggle, because the moment you reach the final goal, the final goal turns into the beginning. You have to start again. That's why struggle is constantly going on. That is distraction. And on the other hand, dullness. But if you do shikantaza, dullness and distraction drop off, from the first.

30:12

You know the [karma](#) that we planted in the past: some karmas were good, some karmas were evil, some karmas were neutral. We created many karmas in the past. And then those karmas are where? You know pretty well, they are at the bottom of this body and mind. Karma is *here*.

Through your daily living, you can realize that your present life is influenced by something else which you don't understand. Maybe some people call it karma – but only when they realize that something's wrong. Because only when you realize something's wrong, then you really get the chance to reflect upon yourself very seriously. That's when you put a certain evaluation on your life: "That is something wrong. That karma is *wrong; evil* karma." But actually, the karma that exists with you is completely beyond the moral sense of good, bad, or neutral.

I tell you very often, that karmas in the past and existing in the present in your life, appear or don't appear when time and occasion are ripe and conditions are arranged. All kinds of karmas are still here, but nothing happens. Only when time and occasions are ripe and conditions arranged perfectly, some karma appears. That is a characteristic of the karma you have created in the past. That's why karmas you created in the past are completely beyond the moral sense of good, bad, or neutral. They are always there. If you don't touch it – if you don't have particular time and opportunity created, or conditions are not arranged – then completely karma sits. But if you create certain conditions and time and occasion, it appears.

So the question is, what kind of time and occasion and conditions should we create in our daily living? That's the point, don't you think? Rather than keeping away or criticizing karmas you did in the past. Because, karmas in the past are completely quiet in your daily living. But any time, anywhere, they appear and disappear according to time and occasion and conditions *you* do.

So this is karma. The point is that life is not going backward; life must go forward. We know that pretty well. In order to go forward to the future, actually there is no chance to discriminate

or to blame the karmas you did in the past, because karmas are quiet in your life. But karmas appear *why*? Because you move toward the future. You do something: you create time, occasion, and conditions; that's why karmas appear. That means you are alive.

Anyway, we have to move toward the future. There is no chance to blame your karmas in the past. Good or bad, right or wrong, whatever you say: karmas don't care.

And also, karmas appear ignoring your judgement, evaluation, and dislike – whatever. Karmas appear only when time and occasion are right, and conditions arranged. They appear even though you don't like it; that's why you are confused. So, it is very important what kind of time and occasion and conditions we should make from moment to moment in the process of moving to our future – rather than criticizing and blaming the karmas in the past.

The important point is that we have to create good time and occasion and good conditions, as best as we can. If you create good time and occasion, and good conditions ... immediately some of the karmas in the past which are called "good" appear in the present. And, if you have done it, immediately that will be a seed of the karma which will appear in the future. So, you can always sow a good seed, because of good conditions and good time and occasions you create, day after day. And then, evil karmas don't have a chance to appear. The evil karmas are always here, very quiet; but if you always create good karmas, then the evil karmas will disappear of themselves. They lose the chance to appear.

38:30

What is "good"? What is a good time and occasion, and what is a good condition? That is a point. This *good* is not the *good* opposed to *evil*. This good is *super-good*: the supreme good, beyond good or bad, right or wrong. Such a good seed should be sowed, right now, right here, from day to day. At that time, that good seed is planted in your life, and creates new life.

We call this *fukutoku* [*suru*]. *Fukutoku* means merit and virtue. [*Suru* (累積?)] means to accumulate. So, to accumulate merit and virtue: that means, to sow a good seed. Completely that good seed originates from the intrinsic value of very pure human activities. That is *fukutoku*: merit and virtue. *Fukutoku* [*suru*], we say.

Let me say about this, still we don't understand it, because why it is that dullness and distraction drop off from the first if you accumulate merit and virtue?

In order to understand this point, first of all we have to see practice for the long range, life after life. Not only seeing your life in this life, in this world; you have to see your whole life, life after life; maybe the next life, or the life after next life. Anyway, life is continually going on, because we created karma in the past, and also we are creating new karma now. And then, as long as we are creating new karma from moment to moment, it means a future will exist, so you can get a chance to be born in the next life. That is the meaning or sense of the theory of karma. As long as we have karma in the past and we are creating karma in this life, we have to have a future. Life is going on, constantly.