



30. ZUIKO REDDING

Zuiko Redding is a Soto Zen priest and the guiding teacher of Cedar Rapids Zen Center in Iowa. Redding grew up in Texas where she encountered Zen as a university student. She studied in Milwaukee with Tozen Akiyama and in Minneapolis with Dainin Katagiri. In 1992 she was ordained in Japan by Tsugen Narasaki. She remained to practice under his direction at Zuioji Monastery and its mountain training center, Shogoji. She received certification as a teacher in the Soto tradition from Rev. Narasaki in 1996 and returned to the US in 1997. She has done monastic practice at Hokyoji in southern Minnesota.

Zuiko Redding is also a member of the American Zen Teachers Association and of the Association of Soto Zen Buddhists.

INTERVIEW

Q: Can you please tell me about your teacher and the way he/she taught? In essence, did your teacher ask you for money as payment for the Zen teachings, meditations, workshops and retreats or for any other services?

Zuiko Redding: I received novice ordination and trained for full ordination in Japan. My teacher is Tsugen Narasaki Roshi. ("Roshi" is an honorific title.) He is the abbot of Zuioji, a Soto Zen training monastery in Niihama, Japan. As is the tradition in Japan, he never asked me for payment for any of his teaching. My payment was to train well and to open the dharma widely in America.

I don't know for sure, but I doubt Narasaki Roshi received any personal donations for talks he gave or sesshins he led elsewhere. In Japan, people give to the dharma, not the teacher, so donations were given to the monastery. He was supported by the monastery as we all were. Receiving personal gifts was frowned on for all of us. Donations were for the dharma, not for personal use, so we shared whatever we received with the rest of the community. This did not mean that one gave all one's wealth to the community but simply that, if one received something - money, food or other gift - it was given to the community.

In Japan, the teacher supports the person he/she has ordained and who is training under her/him. Tsugen Roshi paid for my robes when I needed new ones for special ceremonies, and the monastery paid my travel expenses in Japan when they sent me from one temple to another.

My teacher taught that we should give donations to the community rather than keep them for ourselves. This is what I do here with donations for talks, sesshins and such. I do not charge for anything I do. If someone

really wishes to know what they should give for my services for a wedding, for instance, I tell them to ask around about the going price, then write the check to Cedar Rapids Zen Center. I do ask for reimbursement of gasoline and associated costs when I travel for the Center, and the Center provides me with housing and health insurance. I previously received a small stipend, but we've discontinued that since I now receive Social Security.

Q: When you were ordained, was this to be a monk or a priest?

Zuiko Redding: First, let's tackle ordination. Now, as was the case in the Buddha's time, there are two stages of ordination. In the Buddha's time, someone joining the sangha would have his or her head shaved and be given robes and a bowl and be welcomed into the community as a novice. This meant that one always went out with others when the 3-month rainy season retreat (vassa) ended. One could not wander and teach on one's own. After doing vassa for five years, one would receive permission to go out alone to teach. In modern Japan, one finds a mentor. This person gives novice ordination and guides one's training. As in ancient India, one has to have monastic training in order to receive final ordination and permission to teach. The period is shorter now, perhaps because so many temple teachers are needed. Teacher and trainee decide together when the time is right for what's now called "dharma transmission".

Now, let's deal with monk and priest. There is no clear distinction between the two. In the Buddha's time there was no difference between these two. In the earliest sangha, monks and nuns spent the 3-month rainy season retreat in a monastery, then wandered the countryside begging and giving dharma instruction until the next rainy season. This meant that they spend six months of each year as monastics and six months as priests. In modern times in the Japanese tradition we usually train in the monastery, then go to a temple to serve a sangha. We may return to monastic life to

deepen our practice, however. Many temple teachers live essentially a monastic life in their temples. I do that and I have a number of friends who do that in Japan. Theravadin temple teachers in Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka also do this. Also, there are lifelong monks in Japan. My teacher is one of them. Many temple teachers return to the monastery as teachers and monastics in their sixties and seventies when they have successors to take over their temple duties.

So the short answer is that I am both monk and priest.

Q: Why is it that Zen monks are not celibate, as is the case in some of the older Buddhist traditions?

Zuiko Redding: In Japan the answer is historical. In the Meiji Era (after the opening of Japan to trade with the West in the 19th century), the government forced temple teachers to marry. Many lifelong monks and nuns were forced from monasteries and made to marry. In those years Buddhism was discriminated against and attempts were made to weaken and destroy it. Clergy were not allowed to wear Buddhist clothing outside their temples. Shinto became the state religion. Now that temple teachers are more free, many are opting not to marry. Many who marry have wives who live nearly monastic lives with them. The vast majority of married clergy in Japan live normal family lives, however.

In China, Zen (Ch'an) and Vietnam (Thien), Zen ordained people are celibate. In Korea, I think, there are both married and celibate Zen (Son) temple teachers.

Q: What are your views on teachers who have no ordination and no formal training, but go out there and advertise themselves as "enlightened", "awakened", and/or "Self realized" on facebook and

other media outlets and then ask for money for their teachings? Some of them ask for up to 150 dolours per hour on Skype. They also charge for satsangs (meetings), meditations and retreats.

Zuiko Redding: "Dolour" (I think you meant "dollars.") is an apt word - it means "pain" in Latin. That's what these people often cause. Someone with little practice experience and training to teach is totally unable to lead others. To take their money and pretend to lead them is totally against the practice they're pretending to teach. They often harm people by misleading them about what practice really is and how we go about it. They can also be downright dangerous if they deal with psychologically fragile people.

Q: Yes, but they also say that there is no authority in non-duality and no one to answer to since it's all maya (apparent reality) anyway? In essence, they say it doesn't matter what you do because there is no karma or dharma?

Zuiko Redding: I'm not sure who "they" are, but they're no one I know. And they could get into deep trouble if they go too far with this "no authority, no one to answer to" thing when they get hauled over for speeding. :-)

To talk about maya is to see this world as it is – ever -changing according to causes and conditions in which nothing has an inherent self-nature. In the midst of this birds are hatched, birds sing and grow old, birds die. So do we. Our practice and training is in walking with non-duality and duality simultaneously. Non-duality says there is no one to be born and no one to die but I'm a fool if I don't take care of this body and mind just as it is right now - if I don't pay attention to the world of duality in the full knowledge that its look of permanence and independence is just an illusion. In actuality,

our paying attention to duality, by having lunch, going to work, taking care of our affairs is an expression of non-duality. It is us doing what needs to be done at the moment to be a functioning part of this ever-changing, impermanent dream. Peace lies in just doing the next thing in full realization of impermanence, interdependence and no self-nature.

Answering to my teacher or my colleagues or my students is a manifestation of non-duality. If I didn't take my teacher's advice, for instance, there would no longer be the non-duality of our relationship. He can't be a teacher if I'm not a student. And - yes - he's my teacher even now - 15 years after my dharma transmission.

The Buddha taught that in this non-dual world we are all subject to cause and effect. There's a Chinese story about an old teacher who was reborn 500 times as a fox because he didn't feel he was subject to cause and effect. It's in the Blue Cliff Record, I think. Just as you and I exist in non-duality, so do karma and dharma.

Q: What if someone has had a lot of formal training with a Zen teacher, or perhaps is even a Roshi, who then decides to leave the traditional sangha and set up their own kind of not-for-profit sangha and charge or even trademark some aspects of the dharma?

What authority do they have to answer to? And, is this setting a positive, a negative, or a neutral example for others to follow suit?

Zuiko Redding: I'm not sure I understand the part about "leave the traditional sangha and set up their own kind of not-for-profit sangha". Does that mean the person leaves the teaching as it is traditionally taught?

My teacher expected me to leave the monastery and either found a new sangha or become the teacher /clergyperson / monk for an existing Zen sangha. And I, along with our sangha, indeed have set up a non-profit religious organization. This follows the process that began in the Buddha's time and it is entirely "traditional". In countries where it is not possible to provide for the temple with donations, it's fine to charge in order to pay the mortgage and other bills and support the teacher. While it's preferable to exist solely on donations, we sometimes have to be realistic.

The important thing - the mission of financial support - is to ensure the health of the dharma. The source is not important as long as the funds are used in service of providing a place for learning and practicing dharma and people to teach it.

When people attempt to "brand" their dharma with things like "Big Mind" or whatever, or when people support expensive lifestyles with the fees they charge, I wonder if the dharma is actually what is being taught. The vast majority of my colleagues, I think, would also wonder. The dharma is for everyone. Adding catch phrases is just something extra. Charging a lot of money does not make the dharma available to all. Usually, it is the desire for rewards - fame, profit, etc. - that is reflected here, not the dharma. This teacher is more interested in personal gain than he or she is in the welfare of the people who come or the welfare of the Buddha's teachings. In other words, this is a business, not a dharma organization.

In Japan, such people would answer to the Soto Zen national organization. In America, we are setting up standards and guidelines that our teachers will answer to. However, in neither country can someone be legally prevented from teaching dharma that doesn't conform to some standard of

teaching or ethics. The only thing we can do is be very public about the fact that this teaching is not in line with our ethical standards and practices.

END OF INTERVIEW