

Excerpt from the unpublished,
“All Is My Teacher” by Shibuya Sensei

VIII. Hindrance

c. Delusion

I jumped out of the Master’s temple without any idea where to go or stay. Automatically, I took a west-bound train. Sitting in the seat of the train almost blank minded, a thought flashed on me:

“Yes, I will visit *Roshi* Hashimoto!” *Roshi* is the title of a teacher who is officially admitted as an enlightened monk. We have only a few *roshi* in one generation, so it is a highly honored title which is coveted and respected by all practitioners. *Roshi* Hashimoto was the *seido* (the highest authority in a monastery regarding the practice, is especially invited by the abbot of the monastery) of Zuioji Proper Monastery under whom my Master trained five years. In his daily life, the Master most frequently mentioned about *Roshi* Hashimoto on a par with *Roshi* Ito Taigan of Shoju-an, in Shinshu. *Roshi* Hashimoto was exactly the mirror of the Zen practice.

I supposed *Roshi* was staying at Zuioji Monastery which is located in Shikoku-island, therefore, straightway I rushed there through Nagoya, Kyoto, Osaka, Okayama, Takamatsu, and Niihama. When I reached there it was a little before noon of the next day. Zuioji Monastery is a huge temple. A monk received me and sorrily told that the *Roshi* was not there but in Hokyoji that is his own temple. Immediately, I turned around and was going to leave the place. The reception monk was quite surprised at me and said:

“It is almost noon, you please stay for a while, we will serve you with lunch, moreover, Hokyoji is far away in the deep mountains, it is impossible for you to reach there today.” In fact, he was *Roshi* Ikko Narazaki, the abbot of the monastery, of which I was intuitively aware from his demeanor. So I a little acted as if I were an ancient monk and declared:

“I am looking for *Roshi* Hashimoto, unless he is here, there is no reason to linger.”

Just I went back to Niihama, Takamatsu, Okayama, Osaka, Kyoto, Maibara, then turning to north, Fukui and Ono from there I took a bus and reached a village. Hokyoji village was still two kilometers into mountains without any facilities of transport. The Monastery located on the top of a hill which was quite far from the village. When I reached there, the gate of the Monastery, at last, it was just closing. I asked the monk who was closing the gate:

“Could you please receive me, I came from Hakuhoji, to meet *Roshi* Hashimoto.” However, the monk did not give me any favor and bluntly said:

“It is getting dark, you come back tomorrow.” Although, this was quite a merciless treatment, I just obeyed the instruction and left the gate. I went

back to the first gate and came back to the front premises. It was dark already. A tall pine tree was standing at the center of the front premises. I determined to stand whole the night in front of the main hall chanting the devotion to the Triple Gems. I heard the bells and wood board drum were rung and stroke telling the end of evening meditation and the time for going to the bed. Finally one monk was going around the entire building checking security with a torch light. The monk knowingly-either with compassion or curiosity, flashed me, too, but he did not take any action. Then, perfect silence and darkness governed the mountains. I was a little bit tired and took rest leaning against the pine tree. At midnight, *Roshi* Hashimoto got up and went to the bath room.

IX. Hokyoji

a. Hokyo Jakuen

Hearing and understanding that it was *Roshi* Hashimoto, I again started standing in front of the main hall. Still all was dark. I just chanted the devotion to the Triple Gems remembering the hardship and determination which was achieved by the Second Patriarch Hui-ko. The short night of the midsummer started slowly and slowly dawning.

Surrounded by fresh green and tender hills all around in the perfect quietude and peacefulness, here stands an old monastery aged seven centuries. Far away from the dirt and noises of the human community and beyond the age of modern times, a big main hall and two storied living quarters retains the face of the Kamakura Era. Pines and cypresses sing the songs of the dawn attuned by chirping of little birds. This is the monastery which was founded by Zen Master Hokyo Jakuen who came over from China as an immigrant monk and trained under Zen Master Dogen and Koun Ejo

After realizing the mind of *Avalokitesvara*, he retired to deep into the mountains where nobody trespassed. Nobody heard about him for twenty years. One day the lord of the district went out for hunting and was chasing a deer into deep mountains and saw an old monk was meditating on a gigantic rock which was hanging over a steep cliff. The lord was surprised and remembered that a story regarding a mysterious Chinese monk's hermitage had been widely told in that district.

Still half doubting his vision, the lord approached the old monk. How serene he was! The lord was spellbound with ineffable joy. Without any consciousness, the lord prostrated to him three times and inquired of his health. The old monk was gracefully smiling at him. The lord thought that this is the blessing to his district and people. He determined to invite him to his place and train under him.

This was Zen Master Hokyo Jakuen. Accordingly, he came down to the lord's district and founded a monastery which was named after him. He survived forty years till he became one hundred twenty and trained many outstanding monks such as Giun, the Fifth Abbot and revivalist of Eihei-ji and Keizan Jokin, the Founding Master of Sojiji Headquarters Monastery.

The monastery started the morning routine with bells and other signals and finally calmed down with breakfast. I went to the reception and requested an audience with *Roshi* Hashimoto. This time the reception changed for another monk who looked gentler and kinder. Immediately he accepted me. I changed the clothes into the formal dress from the hippie style and was taken to the *Roshi*'s room.

b. *Roshi* Hashimoto Eko

I was led by the reception monk, who was holding a burning incense stick, to the *Roshi*'s room in a quite formal manner of audience with a Zen Master. Guided by the monk whose name was Ueda Esho, I proceeded to the seat of the *Roshi* and prostrated three times, the *Roshi* stood up simultaneously with my third prostration and returned one prostration to me. I sat facing him. I told him that I came from Hakuhoji, I went to Zuioji first and tried here, that was why I reached here so late in the dusk. *Roshi* Hashimoto asked me:

"Where have you been last night?" I answered:

"I was standing in front of the *hatto*." A young monk was serving *chanoyu* (tea ceremony, green powdered tea) to all the participants in *choson* (the morning inquiry). *Roshi* asked:

"Daishun, what is *hatto*?" The young chubby monk around twenty years old, whose name is Daishun answered:

"*Hatto* is the hall for ceremonies, venerable sir."

"That is right, we have no *hatto* in this monastery, the hall is not a *hatto*, but a *hondo* which is for a *butsuden* as well as *hatto*."

Roshi Hashimoto was just my size--five feet three inches, and about seventy years old. He looked so relaxed and natural. He had been staying in this monastery with two disciples whose names were Ueda Esho and Matsuda Toden besides his first disciple's disciple--grand disciple, his name was Fujiwara Daishun. The *Roshi* was appointed the abbot of this monastery which is the Second Monastery of the Soto School as well as *seido* of Eiheiji. He was respected as the best *roshi* of the time. The followers believed he is a five hundred years time great teacher. His life was just devoted to Zen Master Dogen. Every morning and night, when he woke up and went to bed, he greeted the portrait of Dogen. He studied and practiced exactly as the Zen Master instructed, and wrote precious commentaries which are important to practice authentic meditation.

Buddhism originated from the Buddha's teaching. Generally they believe Buddhism split into two major sects: Mahayana and Theravada and they are different. However, in so far as meditation is concerned, there is no difference at all, especially with the Breathing Meditation (*anapanasati*). The exact and precise essence of the practice and philosophy of *anapanasati* has been maintained by the School of Bodhidharma, Yuen-shan Wei-yen, Dogen, and Eko Hashimoto. In this regard, *Roshi* Hashimoto's commentaries on Zen Master Dogen's *Fukanzazengi* (Exhortation to Zazen) and *Hachidainingaku* (The Eight Reminders of the Great Ones) are the climax.

He was a revivalist as well as a reformer. He fought against overwhelming corruption and oblivion of the genuine life and practice without any help. He was struggling alone to excavate and preserve the pure practice of *shikantaza* (the wholehearted sitting absorption).

c. The Meditation Rock

They were busy, because the anniversary of the Founding Master, Hokyo Jakuen was close. It is annually celebrated on August twenty-eight. This is not only important for Hokyōji itself, but also for Eihei-ji. After the discord between the third patriarch and the fourth one, Eihei-ji declined and no one could run the monastery except the fifth patriarch, Giun who as the disciple of Jakuen. Since then Eihei-ji was maintained by the abbots from Hokyōji. Therefore, every year Eihei-ji dispatches special envoy on that occasion along with a band of assisting monks.

During the anniversary, all the direct disciples of the *Roshi* gathered to help him. They were *Roshi* Kamada Ryusen, the abbot of Daijuji Monastery, *Roshi* Narazaki Ikko, the abbot of Zuiōji Monastery, bhikkhuni Yoshida Eshun, the head of Kaizenji Conventry. Not only the direct and indirect disciples of the *Roshi* from various places, but many old and young bhikkhunis from nearby nunneries participate in this gathering. Many devotees and mere spectators with children and relatives come and stay in the temple for overnight practice and amusement, or even making love or whatever.

Especially, the name of *Roshi* Hashimoto attracted a big crowd that year. In fact, *Roshi* Hashimoto changed the atmosphere of the monastery. First of all he was eager to reveal the achievement of the Founding Master Hokyo Jakuen to the world. He identified the meditation rock on which the Founding Master used to sit. The rock is located on the backside of the hill and not so far from the monastery. The place is a flat skyline which combines two peaks. The rock is reddish huge one. The top is flat and good enough for meditation. The Founding Master sat there and lived in a hut made in the lower place descending to the canyon. The *Roshi* named the rock “Anzenseki”(the Rock of Meditation) and made a sign board and guiding boards up to the rock.

The *Roshi* also checked all the properties of the monastery which mainly consisted of the fine arts brought by the Founding Master from China and the most popular portrait of Zen Master Dogen who is looking upon the moon. The *Roshi* examined and corrected the mistakes of devotional chanting of the sutras and obvious misinterpretations of Zen Master Dogen’s essays. I also was busy helping the *Roshi* with small chores: serving meals, preparing calligraphy ink, washing his body whatever possible. I was quite excited, although by nature I am disgusted with these festivals.

It was the *Roshi*’s regret that only a few practitioners stayed there, although the status as a monastery is only the second to *Daihonzan* (the Headquarters Monastery--the First Monastery--Eihei-ji). It was also, to some extent sad to me that *Roshi* Hashimoto’s disciples were only five or six. It was even strange that he was such a great and famous *roshi* and

had only a few disciples. One reason for it might have been that the *Roshi* was not gifted with good health. He retired from his temple very early, at the age of Zen Master Dogen's life span--fifty-six years old.

Notwithstanding all the unfavorable general circumstances, it was quite natural that I wished to be a disciple of the *Roshi*. It was also a good luck and convenient that all the disciples of the *Roshi* were present. The *Roshi* consented to accept me provided that I secure agreement from my parents and my Master, Chigen Sakimura whom the *Roshi* respected, although my Master was young and one of the students of himself. My Master Chigen sakimura was exceptionally outstanding among other tranees at Zuioji Proper Monastery.

d. The Buddha's Son

After the function was over, I went back home to meet and get consent from my parents and my Master Ven. Chigen Sakimura. My mother said:

"Traditionally, we believe that if anyone of the family members renounces the world and becomes a *bhikkhu* or *bhikkhuni*, by that meritorious deed his or her nine ancestors and descendents as well as ninth cousins will be reborn to heavens. Also it is said that if we have three sons, we should let at least one of them renounce the world, so your determination is auspicious."

Before this I wrote mother asking to send a pair of *samue* (working clothes), she sent it to me along with a letter, and also she wrote a letter to the *Roshi* Hashimoto. I did not even imagine that, but the *Roshi* mentioned about my mother's letter with exceptional appreciation. I believe my mother was more serious and sincere than me to be a monk.

Our family had already one monk some hundred and fifty years ago. He was great great grand uncle, an uncle of our great greandfather. This ancestral uncle set forth from our home when our great grandfather was a baby saying

"You baby grow big," and kissed him. First he became an abbot of nearby village temple and started promotion to promotion, finally he became the big abbot of a temple near the Capital, Kyoto. When our villagers went for pilgrimage around the country, they met a monk coming with an attendant monk holding an umbrella upon him. Hearing the dialect of the pilgrims, the beautiful monk spoke to them:

"How dear you people, I hear my native dialect, my home is so and so, please hand this paper to my parents." This was our ancestral monk.

However, my father's response was different from my mother. Again I felt confrontation with the society, he said:

"It is said that if anyone plays on a flute, you dance on the tune. You do not become such an old fashioned staff. In old days all princes and princesses, aristocrats and brilliant persons became *bhukkhus* and *bhikkhunis*, but you see nobody becomes one now-a-days." This remark is important in terms of the real social life. We can not survive ignoring it. Especially, since the situation of Buddhism in this country is negative. The practice of meditation is not popular among the persons who are busy with their daily life: study, sports, business, television, parties, social

relations, communal obligations, and business responsibilities, and family pressure. Simply, they are busy and tired, they are tense and depressed. They want rest and excitement, but not practice or training.

The main current of the social as well as international thought is science: physics, mathematics, psychology, psychiatry, biology, medical science, hence pragmatism, materialism, empiricism, or realism. Herewith, no logic or argumentation works. I simply said:

“Father, I am a Buddha’s son, not yours.” Father was shocked obviously, he shut his mouth for a while, and said:

“If you become a monk, you will be the person who will reform Buddhism.” This was the implicit or explicit answer of his. There was no problem with my Master.

e. The Voice of Tide

After I came back, the *Roshi* was absent from the monastery for about two weeks. . He was invited by *Roshi* Kamada Ryusen, the second disciple of his to his monastery, Daijuji in Tottori Prefecture.. The *Roshi* went there with Daishun, therefore Esho, Toden, and myself were left in the monastery. After the *Roshi* left, to my surprise, nobody got up in the morning. The big building of the monastery turned to a haunted house: no meditation, no chanting, no breakfast, no activities, no visitors, even no sound.

Esho was a kind person and was almost the same age, around forty, as my Master. In fact they were close friends with each other when they trained together at Zuioji Monastery. Esho was especially kind to me and taught many details regarding monastic daily life: how to put on robes, to greet with the *Roshi* and other senior monks, to cook, to eat, to ring bells and gongs, and to beat drums and wooden crackers. However, he was not friendly with Toden, even hated him for his mean and cruel behavior towards novice monks. These brother monks were always antagonistic against each other.

The *Roshi* came back alone, because Daishun was still busy at Daijuji Monastery. Daishun’s role at Hokyoji was the attendant to the *Roshi*, that means for the time being, the *Roshi* had no attendant. Naturally Daishun’s absence was filled by the three monks (including me). It was a precious occasion; thus I could have close contact with the *Roshi*. Through closer service to him, I could know his genuine personality.

One day all monks went for alms, leaving the *Roshi* and myself at the monastery. I had to do everything. Cooking lunch for the *Roshi*, striking the big bell at noon time, an acting monk for a visiting cameraman. Anyway I cooked pumpkin and other vegetables. However, I committed a big mistake. When the vegetables were boiled, I added seasonings--soya sauce, but instead of it I did Worcester sauce. I had no time to cook again, I had to do other chores, too. So, I brought lunch to his room, and attended to him for the second helping. Soon he finished eating without saying anything. Then I apologized:

“I am sorry *Roshi-sama*, carelessly I added Worcester sauce instead of soya sauce. Please kindly forgive me.” Then, the *Roshi* said

“Oh, I did not know, I felt spicy.”

After coming back to the kitchen, I laughed and was happy with such an indifferent person. He was not concerned with anyone's mistakes and he maintained perfect equanimity and serenity and that purified me of my feeling of guilt.

Also cleaning the Roshi's room while he is chanting at the *hondo* fell upon my duty. I cleaned not only the room itself, but his toilet and wash stand which was quite dirty. The *Roshi* came back from chanting and went to wash hands and found that the toilet and washing stand were perfectly clean. He said in a big voice, “Oh, how much I am grateful!”

His narration was so natural and true that I have never heard such a genuine, natural, and pure narration. I knew this *Roshi* is really enlightened and therefore, totally free from love and hate. His life is just expression of sincerity, appreciation, and gratitude. If he struck bells, it sounded totally different from others' striking. How the vibration was pure and penetrating far and far. If he chanted with hundreds of monks, only his voice was audible from far away. It was really Buddha's purified voice of *jhana*. It was the voice of the tide of *avalokitesvara*.

When I came back to the monastery from the journey to acquire the consent of my parents and the Master for becoming the disciple of the *Roshi*, he took an immediate action for the ordination ceremony. He ordered Bhikkhuni Yoshida Eshun to prepare my *kessaya*. They measured the length of my elbow which is the standard for the calculation of the size of everything. Now I was not a guest practitioner, but a candidate for a Bhikkhu. Naturally they began to treat me as their brother, especially Esho spared more time with me discussing Dharma, Zen Master Dogen, Hokyo Jakuen, *koans*, his life story and general situation of Buddhism. However, these topics are not so important to me, but his complaint about the *Roshi* was a serious matter to me.

f. The Stagnant Pond

Originally, Esho came from the same district as the *Roshi*, Aichi Prefecture; therefore, their interrelation was close. Even their appearances were very alike. They looked like real father and son. They did not reserve anything to each other both in positive and negative aspects. The more Esho criticized the *Roshi*, the more he respected him. The sharp point was how the care of the *Roshi* ruined his time, health, and aspiration for practice and study. As I have mentioned before, the *Roshi* was a sick person. That means Esho had to be not only an attendant monk, but also a nurse.

By nature Esho liked study more than practice: therefore, he sat very late studying *Shobogenzo*. Consequently, it was difficult for him to get up early. The *Roshi* always scolded him on this matter. While, Toden was a more practical and efficient person, he was an ex-soldier who used to tease new comers. He had no idea what *Shobogenzo* is, and was only loyal to Zen Master Dogen and the *Roshi* without any reason. Of course, Toden does not like Esho's criticism against the *Roshi*. However, their

hostile relationship was mitigated by Daishun who was young but good enough to let people be relaxed.

One morning, soon after the *Roshi* came back from Daijuji, an incident happened. I was quite embarrassed and confused and lost faith and trust in not only the *Roshi* himself, but in the entire community of monks. Anyway the majority is married; they are fried ice. The entirety is corrupted. Although some pure and sincere persons try to be free from the general degeneration, it is impossible to be perfectly innocent. In so far as they associate with the majority, they are also included in it. Nobody is free from the common karma, unless one is perfectly enlightened.

We were busy that morning, because two or three carpenters came to change the plan of the kitchen. Esho told me that the *chosan* was dropped. Accordingly, I was going to the kitchen with *samue*. I was stopped on the way by Toden who wore *koromo* and *kessaya* and said:

“Where are you going, do you not attend at *chosan*?” I answered:

“There is no *chosan*, Esho-san told me.” However, Toden almost grabbed my wrist. I went to *Roshi*’s room with *samue*. Then, Esho also came with *samue*, whom the *Roshi* scolded:

“You are so slow, what is the matter coming to *chosan* with *samue*?”

After the *chosan* finished I wrote a poem as follows:

I came here to meet the greatest *Roshi*
However, hearing and looking are different.
I am sorry for your kindness for *Kessaya*,
Still, I should not falter at the small matter.
I should not be distracted to a wrong way;
I seek the Dharma in the way of the Buddha,
The Patriarch Hui-ko, and Zen Master Dogen
Becoming a skelton, cutting the elbow,
Travelling thousands of miles.
If we are over protected by other’s sacrifice
We will become stagnant.
Stand on our own feet!
Go to alms for our food!
Stay in meditation whole the night!
Do not put on silk!
Do not preserve extra clothing!
Be fair and equal to all!
Be fearless!
Be free from inconvenience!
Do not admit discord!
Do not suppress other’s aspiration and good nature!
I wish to return to myself
I wish to walk alone.
I go on my way
Thank you for your kindness.
Thank you for your instruction.
Thank you for your wonderful *jhana*

I prostrated to him three times and offered this poem which the *Roshi* read and after reading it, he put it down. I took it back. The *Roshi* asked me:

“When do you go?” I answered:

“I will go right now.” The *Roshi* said:

“That is regretful.” Again I prostrated to him three times, and left his room. I went downstairs and met Esho and handed over the poem to him, and packed the rucksack and left the monastery. I was sad. I was extremely sad and murmured a poem to myself:

All is sick; all is crazy:
Oh, where is the Buddha?
Where is Zen Master Dogen?
Again, I lost the way
Where am I going?
Cold and silent darkness
Extends endlessly.
Where is the light?
Where is my repose?

The rucksack was heavy on my back. It was an unbearable burden. I had no energy to carry it on my back. I walked to the village step by step enduring the weight of the burden. The cosmos flowers were so beautiful and elegant on the roadside. The sky was blue. The sunlight was crystalline. It was autumn. All was so sad in the perfect quietude along the road through the paddy fields...

XI. Glance

c. Seeing the True Nature

...Soon after coming back from the cave, the Master took us to Sojiji, another Headquarters Monastery of the Soto School on a par with Eiheiji. Sojiji was founded by Zen Master Keizan who is revered by the followers as “the Mother of the School,” whereas Zen Master Dogen is called “the Father of the School.” In terms of the number of the followers and the branch temples, Sojiji is far bigger than Eiheiji, because Zen Master Keizan adopted more flexible practice for propagating the teaching. Accordingly, Eiheiji is the center of the authentic practice while Sojiji emphasizes more applied practice. It was not unexpected that the Master Sakimura preferred Sojiji to Eiheiji for his final practice betraying *Roshi* Hashimoto’s teaching as well as the Master’s Master, Maruyama Eichi who was also a staunch follower of Zen Master Dogen.

We joined meditation retreat for one week. While I was there, unexpectedly I met Fujiwara Daishun from Hokyoji. Sometime later, Daishun visited our temple and reported the situation of Hokyoji after I left there. They were much surprised at my sudden quitting, and at the same time appreciated my behavior as real Hui-ko, the Second Patriarch who has neither attachment nor hesitation and who sacrifices anything for the true seeking. Naturally, *Roshi* Hashimoto took a stern attitude towards Toden and exiled him to Daijuji Monastery for two, three offences. To all persons surprise, after Toden was exiled, Ueda Esho eloped with a *Bhikkhuni* with whom he was in love for a long time. He took some temple money. Consequently, the *Roshi* had no attendant monk for the time being, and therefore, Daishun requested me to help the *Roshi*. I felt a big honor and in fact wished to go back to the *Roshi*. However, this time, my Master did not agree with me to go to Hokyoji saying:

“If you go there, Toden will lose the chance to come back to Hokyoji, it is better for you not to go, anyone will come to the *Roshi*.” To this opinion, I felt deliberate compassion, accordingly I stayed back at Hakuhoji and I lost the possibility to become the disciple of *Roshi* Hashimoto.

One or two years after this incident, I read a newspaper reporting the *Roshi* Hashimoto’s demise. I was much upset and remembered that I had not done anything good to the *Roshi*, and it was my deep and constant regret. I went to my Master and said:

“I think I must go to the funeral service at this instant.” He said:

“It is not necessary for you to go. I also do not go, because Hashimoto *Roshi*’s teaching is alive in my heart.”

However, I went to Hokyoji to express my deepest condolences and met *Roshi* Kamatani Ryusen, *Roshi* Narazaki Ikko and other disciples and all relatives except Ueda Esho. I also met Matsuda Toden who took me to his room in Hokyoji and asked the reason I left the *Roshi*. I told him the precise situation of the morning in favor of Esho and criticizing Toden. However, my observation was a little inclined to the side of Esho who was more appreciated by all disciples for his kindness. Finally his elopement ruined all his good deeds.