

Zazen Zoom Saturday 6 March 2021

In order to realise what the Buddha and the patriarchs have achieved, that is to say the deliverance from the cycle of rebirth and the cessation of suffering, we must dispel ignorance. Ignorance is a blindness that makes us not recognise reality, what buddha-nature is, the essence immanent to all things and all living beings. Or, put another way, ignorance is to adhere to the illusion that the world of phenomena is the only immutable reality and thus lose the sense of emptiness that sustains it.

By not recognising what we ourselves are in our original truth, we remain in ignorance. We adopt this false identity, the individual 'me', which sees and believes itself to be separate from the universe and from others. Life then becomes a struggle to survive, to secure wealth, to dominate others or to dream, through disappointment, of spiritual fulfilment.

Ignorance makes it impossible to distinguish between permanence and impermanence, between appearance and reality. Maya is the illusion that makes us take this unstable, changing world for the only reality, and that provokes identification with this 'me' which is only a mental construct based on conditions, beliefs and fears.

Becoming aware that all the dharmas, phenomena, are Maya leads to the experience of Awakening and liberation, because it means realising the unity of emptiness and phenomena. *"Those who*

awaken completely from illusion," says Master Dogen, "are Buddhas. Those who are deluded about Awakening are sentient beings."

In the truth of Zen, the truth that we live on the zafu, relative and absolute are One, just as Samsara and Nirvana are One, just as Maya and Bodhi are One. The famous Zen formula *'Bonno soku boda'* means that seeing the game of illusions is Awakening.

Zazen is to understand deeply that this Awakening is nothing other than the Mind revealing itself to Itself in the heart of Presence.

The patriarch Nagarjuna wrote: *"The mind that meditates on appearance and disappearance, that considers the impermanence of the world and phenomena, is called the Mind of Awakening."*

During zazen, the Eye-Treasure, the buddha-nature, contemplates the appearance of the relative world in the space of the Mind. Sensations are felt, sounds or smells are perceived, thoughts are seen. If there is no grasping, no identification with all these perceptions by the 'me', it is what Master Dogen calls the actualisation of the fundamental point (*Genjokoan*).

Any attempt to understand or explain brings us back into the fog of discrimination and the world of Maya.

"For the truth of the Dharma," explains Master Dogen, "cannot be obtained either by thought or by the absence of thought."

Let's go back to Master Keizan :

"If you want to dispel ignorance," he says, "zazen is the immediate key to realize the Way and unveil the landscape of your native land."

A former master said: *"When confusion ends, clarity arises, and when it arises Wisdom appears, and when Wisdom appears, Reality is unveiled."*

To rediscover and deepen our own faith in the buddha-way is to practice a meditation that leads us to understand that we have always been in Awakening, that there is no increase, no decrease, no error.

And Master Keizan concludes:

"If you want to put an end to your confusion, you must stop investing yourself in thoughts of good or evil and stop being caught up in the play of your activities. The mind free of thoughts and the body without activity is the essential point. You need to remember this."
