

Zoom Zazen March 27, 2021

To put an end to our uncertainties and illusions, Master Keizan recommended us earlier to stop all attachment to activity. We tend to think that this means "stop doing" and stop moving, but this interpretation is too quick and a bit schematic.

Activity, 'doing', is the way in which the Mind manifests itself to Itself. The Mind uses our senses to perceive Itself in the manifested world. We should never forget that in the Buddha's teaching, in Zen practice, there is no duality between Mind - the essence - and the world of forms. The Buddha looks at the world through our eyes. Thus He is the unchanging witness to the mystery that is constantly unfolding in the world of phenomena. To perceive this truth is to recognise oneself in all beings and things. It is to recognise oneself as Presence.

To realise this, we must accept that our illusory 'me' becomes absorbed in the heart of zazen, disappearing as a 'subject'. This is the Samādhi of the Precious Mirror, the *Hokyo Zanmai*: things are reflected in the Mind in the same way that the moon is reflected in water, in perfect instantaneity, total unity. And to quote Master Dogen:

"The Way did not exist before, it only arises now. Being aware of this, you actualise the fundamental point in this very moment. "

The production of illusions is also a fruit of the Mind itself, and therefore natural. Illusions are the game that creates discriminative thinking in the Mind by taking objects as real.

A deceptive game, but one that is so captivating that we believe it without questioning it, which causes our suffering. What is not natural is attachment to illusion,

and to the idea that phenomena, impermanent by nature, are the Real.

"To stop all attachment to activity", to stop doing, means to stop identifying with the illusory and the reality of things. To think that we are the director of a grandiose performance with neither beginning nor end is a false view. To think that we can change or control phenomena by personal will is an erroneous attitude that reinforces the 'me' and leads us away from the [Buddha] Way.

Master Dogen says:

"Only the ignorant can delude themselves about a 'me' that is in fact a non-me, about a world that is by nature impermanent; only ignorant people refuse to practise the Dharma, turn away from it and may even be averse to it. Is this not going astray?"

Master Keizan gives a pragmatic answer to this invitation "to stop all attachment to activity". It's not a question of practising asceticism or depriving oneself of the pleasures that life offers us every day, but of finding the right attitude thanks to our discernment and our reflection, drawing wisdom from our meditation:

"You must avoid all the devices and tricks, the medicinal recommendations and divinatory arts, the futile songs and frivolous music, the arguments, discussions and idle chatter, the desire for fame and the lure of gain. Don't get embroiled in song or poetry, although it may help to clear the mind. The same goes for writing or calligraphy. This is good advice for practitioners of the Way to follow and the best way to quieten the Mind."

Many Zen practitioners make it a point of depriving themselves of everything good, or of following all sorts of rules religiously. Others refuse all restraint, invoking the principle of their free will and sometimes behave in an extreme way. The Buddha-Way is a path of correctness and measure [deliberation]. The teaching of the Noble Eightfold Path speaks to us of equanimity, contentment, humility, discernment, wisdom and perseverance. We can only realise the Way by understanding that, as Master Dōgen says in the *Gakudōyō-jinshū* (To encourage the mind to study the Way):

"It is not the Buddha who compels us, it is our own strength that draws us. It is from our practice alone that realisation is born. Our true treasures do not come from outside but are inherent in our true nature. Realisation comes through practice."

It is by putting our feet in the footsteps of the Ancients, by following their guidance, that in one leap we can find the fragrance of our homeland and realise the Buddha Way.
