

Zoom Zazen Saturday 3 April 2021

Last week, Master Keizan went into detail about the "Recommendations for the practice of zazen", the Zazen Yōjinki. His aim is to give us the best advice so that our daily conduct becomes consistent with that of the ancient masters, and is the best way to harmonise the mind with the Way.

Master Keizan does not make these recommendations on his own authority. He relies on the Vinaya Pitaka, the set of rules that the Buddha himself put in place to organise the practice of the first monks of the Sangha.

Master Keizan himself was a founder of temples and he also addressed the Japanese monks of his time. This concern to organise community life is absolutely necessary as soon as several practitioners decide to share their daily life in the same place. And, of course, when we talk about rules, we are also talking about sanctions in case of transgression and also about repentance, which must root the spirit of enlightenment in the heart of the disciple.

All collective life needs this framework to prevent the mind from wandering off at tangents, and to offer ways of resolving the inevitable conflicts. We must not consider them as absurd obligations and we must understand their meaning and receive them with respect.

Master Keizan's *Keizan Shingi* follows Master Dogen's *Eihei Shingi*, and Master Hyakujo's (720-814) *Zennen Shingi*, itself inspired by the Vinaya. The term *Shingi* literally means 'immaculate rules', those that purify faults.

This translation is an abbreviation of two Chinese ideograms which mean: *'The rules and discipline of the community as pure as the ocean.'* The ocean is the emptiness that is our homeland, *Ku*.

Following the rules is difficult for those whose 'me' is strong, and therefore indispensable. Following the rules must be seen and accepted as an aid to the *Way*, as a real protection against falling off the path and to reaching the truth of our nature. To follow the rules is a matter of daily life.

We don't do it for ourselves but to harmonise the mind with the Dharma, the Universal Law, and to facilitate the lives of others. We bring the Buddha's teaching to life with our hearts and minds, offering a penetrating attention to every thing and every activity, even the smallest, living each moment in vigilant awareness. And this is what pays homage to the Ancients and keeps the Transmission alive.

Isan gave this advice to his disciple Sekiso:

'Do not neglect the smallest grain of rice, because thousands of other grains of rice will come out of it.'

Sekiso wisely replied:

'Myriads of thousands of grains will come out of this one, but this one, where does it come from?'

Isan laughed and returned to his room. In the evening he went to the dining room and said to the monks:

'Watch out all of you! There's a worm in the rice!'

It is to every thing, every action, every movement of our mind that we must pay conscious attention to honour the teachings of

the Ancients and to harmonise ourselves with the Dharma. The karma we create has no end. Nothing is outside the living Dharma in the manifestation of phenomena.

And it is with an open, curious, respectful mind that we listen to Master Keizan's advice about how to dress:

'Do not dress in luxurious clothes or in rags. Elegant clothes give rise to greed and the fear that someone will steal them. They are therefore an obstacle to the practitioner of the Way.'

'If a donor offers you beautiful clothes, refusing them is an excellent way to follow the Ancients. And even if you wear nice clothes, don't worry about taking excessive care of them. If they are stolen, don't worry about getting them back, don't even care about them, and don't regret the loss.'

'Old clothes need to be washed and mended. Take care of them before you wear them. If you don't take care of them, you may get cold and sick and this will affect your practice.'

'You should not worry about your personal comfort either.'

'But be aware that if clothing is inadequate, food and sleep are insufficient, these are called the "three inadequacies" and your practice may suffer.'

'Heijōshin kore dō' - Daily awareness is the way.

This was Master Nansen's answer to Jōshū who asked him: *'What is the path?'*
