

Master Keizan gives us some further advice:

*"Do not be arrogant, vain or proud of your understanding of the teachings and your spiritual practice. This is the way ordinary people who don't understand the Buddha Way behave. Always keep alive in your mind the vow to end suffering and awaken. Just sit. Don't do anything at all; this is simply how to study Zen."*

You might think that this is useless advice for those who like to practise zazen, because practising zazen protects one from going astray. However, in all the eras of Zen, there have been heretics, opponents, liars without humility, attributing to themselves a knowledge and an awakening that they have not had. And this is still true today. In the time of the Buddha, they were called those 'outside the Way'.

These people have not liberated themselves from the 'me' and have not studied it to the point of going beyond it, overcoming it. They remain attached to appearances and their personal opinions, and speak from their discriminating minds. They construct a persona and use it to enhance themselves in the eyes of others and to gain power over them. This is what we call practice 'outside the Way', for the Buddha taught all aspects of the practice and of the path of the bodhisattva, the awakened being.

What Master Keizan advises is to act and speak without knowing the truth of suffering and the law of karma is to expose oneself to greater suffering than that which one tries to camouflage behind appearances.

An old man, amongst the monks, attended Master Hyakujō's daily talks on Zen. At the end of each session the monks withdrew, and so did he.

But one day he stayed alone with Hyakujō after the monks had left. Hyakujō asked him:

*"Who are you?"*

The old man answered:

*"I am no longer a human being. But I was a long time ago. I was a master of Ch'an and I lived on this mountain surrounded by my students. One day one of them asked me whether or not the awakened man was still subject to the law of causes and consequences. I replied, 'The awakened person is no longer subject to the law of causes and consequences.'*

*"But my answer showed a deep attachment, and I became a fox for five hundred rebirths. I am still a fox today when I return to the mountain. Can you, through your words, deliver me from this state so that I can last come out of this fox body? ... Please, tell me if people are subject to the law of causes and consequences?"*

Hyakujō answered: *"The awakened are ONE with the law of causes and consequences."*

That was all! But at these simple words the old man awoke. He paid homage to Hyakujō by saying: *"Here I am delivered from this fox. But it is on the mountain where I live that I must leave my body. I beg you to celebrate a monk's funeral tomorrow."*

And the old man left. The next day, Hyakujō asked the senior monk to prepare to celebrate the funeral of a monk. The latter replied: *"But no one's been ill recently! For whom does our master wish to celebrate the funeral?"* Hyakujō did not reply.

After the evening meal, Hyakujō took the monks to the mountain. In a cave, he raised the corpse of an old fox with his staff and performed the cremation ceremony.

It is impossible to teach a truth that we ourselves have not realised. To teach what we have not actualised, understood and made real - and to lie in order to appear as though we have - is to produce harmful karma for ourselves and others, and to risk being turned into a fox for 500 lives!

We must be sincere and also very vigilant about what we sometimes pass on to others from our own practice. When practice is used by the 'me' for its own benefit, it becomes impoverished and leads to a false spirituality that binds rather than frees, that promotes egotism, aggravates frustration and hides the truth.

Zen masters have therefore always advised us to sit and to do nothing. Not to create karma from the beliefs of the 'me'; and to do nothing is to follow the cosmic life.

In Master Dogen's *Bendowa*, we find these words reformulated by Master Deshimaru:

*"If we forget body and mind (that is to say: practice Shin jin datsu raku, to drop off, to **disidentify** from the body and the other aggregates), we will be able to enter the house of Buddha. Action will then arise from the body of the Buddha and we will simply have to follow it."*

Let the truth arise from our heart without opposing it with the opinions and beliefs of the 'me' [the self]. This truth is the very heart of zazen, the mystery unveiled in our own mind.

To allow this heart to flow is to do nothing. This is also to study Zen and to teach the Dharma to all beings.

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