

Zoom Zazen Saturday 26 June 2021

The subject of this morning's *kusen* is **Shikantaza**.

Shikantaza is not to *do* something, or even to *do* zazen; it is to be simply seated and to open. All notion of '*doing*' is forgotten.

To open up means to become aware of the innumerable vibrations through which life reveals itself in the body, in the mind, and also all around us - in the form of sensations, emotions, feelings, perceptions, thoughts, images. We have the ability to open up because we are sensitive beings, with sensibilities and perceptions. And because our nature is the same as that of the universe, of all beings, of everything we perceive.

In this simple posture, dropping all thought of gain, we become aware of that which is living in the body, of that which expresses itself all around us - sounds, light, colours, smells. To stay in this vision and to feel it, we must remain vigilant so as not to lose ourselves in words that try to describe or to interpret, that want to hold on to the present moment.

Simply sitting, silently. This is to open the door between our own physical reality and essence, presence, formless emptiness. When we are simply sitting our awareness rejoins the space of that which it contemplates - sensations, perceptions, thoughts - and merges with all this. It's a unity of intense intimacy between subject and object. And this merging, this intimacy can have no place other than that of Presence, the present moment where things appear and disappear.

In this intense intimacy between subject and object, between That which contemplates and that which is contemplated, awareness comes to perceive itself as the source in which the impermanence of things manifests. And this is why we say, "***the light illuminates in itself, through itself***". This intense intimacy between 'we who see' and 'that which is seen' is the heart of zazen, a total oneness with All that Is, the Reality unveiled at the very core of appearances. Simply sitting, we realise what our true nature is. And it's useless to want to explain this in words. We must simply live it in complete awareness, without the intention of doing anything whatsoever.

Shikantaza is an immediate, direct observation of That which Is, here and now. There's no need to refer to knowledge, or to memories; no need to attempt to explain it. True understanding is beyond words, intuitive. In this oneness the 'me' disappears - all that remains is vision, presence. Everything is open. Everything opens naturally, at each moment.

In **Shikantaza**, awareness perceives, sees the characteristics of what appears in the mind but holds onto nothing, grasps nothing. This is the unique and ultimate teaching of **Shikantaza**: *grasp nothing*. When we understand nothing can be grasped, held onto, rejected, we are solely in this state of being 'simply seated' in our own gentleness, in the silence.

This luminous turning-within, sufficient within itself, is practice-realisation. The veil of appearances which deludes us, which keeps us in ignorance of what we are, tears apart, opens and we find ourselves once again, we *see*.

"This is what is called," says Master Keizan, "revealing one's original face, unveiling the landscape of our homeland."

"Shikantaza, to simply sit, is in itself the practice of a Buddha," says Master Dogen. To sit, 'as it is', without wanting to become anything. Understand completely this 'as it is' - Nyoze or Immo. It is thus, it is as we are, now. "To sit thus, 'as it is', is the true form of oneself."

If you apply yourselves to the practice of simply sitting 'as it is', turned inward, forgetting body, mind, thoughts, stories, beyond thinking and knowing - then, concludes Master Dogen, "*You will be in perfect intimacy with Awakening.*"

"Awakening," said the Patriarch Nagarjuna, "is dwelling in the vision which contemplates the impermanence of things."

We cannot distinguish between **Shikantaza** and this Awakening.
