

IZAUK Zoom Sesshin - 11-13th June 2021

Friday 11 June - Zazen 8:00 pm

The sutra of the *Hannya Shin Gyo* sings the truth of what we are, of our nature, of the truth of beings and phenomena.

This sutra is a luminous summary of Prajnâpâramitâ, the Transcendent Wisdom which is that knowledge to which we all aspire, even without knowing it. We - the beings and the whole universe, in continual impermanence, an ever-changing, illusory appearance - live our existences in perfect and unchanging unity with the essence, emptiness, the non-form *Ku*. This is what the sutra of the *Hannya Shin Gyo* proclaims:

"Ku soku ze shiki and shiki soku ze Ku."

But do we really understand the deep meaning of this perfect identity between essence and phenomena?

A Chan Master said:

"That which can, now, speak and act, desire or hate, be benevolent and patient, do good and evil, feel pain or pleasure, see forms and colours, is nothing other than our Buddhahood. All this is eternally the Buddha. Moreover, there is no other Buddha."

The Mahayana sutras also proclaim this truth:

"There is no difference between the Mind, the Buddha, and living beings. Buddhas and living beings are identical in essence and appearance and form one body without any differentiation."

In short, each being is the outpouring of that original purity, the Mind, and each moment is the moment of silent coincidence when the empty essence, emptiness, is revealed in ephemeral form.

We sit before the wall to let this knowledge unfold in our own minds. The purpose of our existence, our secret and often unconscious hope, our practice of zazen, is to live fully, consciously, this silent coincidence where our own mind joins its source and is illuminated in it. There is nothing else to do but to

contemplate the truth of ourselves in the immobility of our posture and to witness without moving, without commenting on the appearance-disappearance of things, beyond any attempt to grasp this truth, beyond any religion, any ritual, any cultural specificity.

It is only in this silent contemplation, in the recollection of our own mind, that we can see Emptiness taking shape, IN-forming itself at every moment in the ceaseless play of the vibration and interrelation of forms. In our own body-mind - a vibration - becomes sensation, emotion, feeling, thought, breath; a spontaneous intelligence becomes consciousness. To know this, to see this, to live this, is to awaken to Buddhahood, to One Mind, to the absolute domain of Reality.

Zazen is the place where this mystery of birth and death is accomplished. This mystery is revealed to us when we see emptiness become form, in the very feeling of sensations, the very appearance of thoughts. This meditation is the place where we see how emptiness comes into existence, shows itself, in a movement of birth and death that has no beginning and no end.

Master Obaku, a disciple of Hyakujo explained:

"All Buddhas and all living beings are none other than One Mind. From beginningless time this Mind, never having come into existence, has never ceased to exist. Without colour, form or appearance, it is neither being nor non-being, neither old nor new. It is neither long nor short, neither large nor small, beyond all delineation or naming, beyond all possibility of being perceived or considered as an object. It is the Real in itself, One Mind, empty space."

Our Zen practice is to enter into the Real, to witness the grand spectacle of emptiness taking place in our own body, in our own mind. Zazen is the place where Awakening is revealed, where One Mind shines.

Saturday 12 June 2021 - Zazen 8:00 am

The Mind of Awakening has led us in this life to follow the path that the Buddha taught. This is an incredible opportunity! But we often walk with this pre-formed idea that we can reach the same awakening, without really knowing what it is. The Buddha-Way is nothing other than self-knowledge. We have everything we need to reach our destination, but we travel with a usurped identity, an outdated visa. We use maps that are out of date.

The conditioned character that tries to find the path, which we have adopted as our identity and which we call 'me', must be studied and then forgotten, because its beliefs are only mental and it is walking blindly. In order for us to take a simple and direct route, with lightweight, appropriate luggage, the Buddha explained to us all the basics of meditation, the right information to advance on the path. Zazen is the path itself of this self-discovery.

To know oneself is to know One Mind.

"All the Buddhas and all living beings are none other than One Mind!"

This is the revelation. It is simple and it is the key to the door of Reality, the Dharma. Our meditation is the truth to be practised and realised in our daily lives.

"And if you do not firmly believe that this One Mind is the Buddha," says Master Obaku, "and if you want to practise by attaching yourself to personal ideas, or to acquire merit, you make yourself the object of a total misunderstanding and deviate from the Way."

One Mind is our own nature. It is actualised in every moment, in this zazen of now, in our daily activity. It is our very experience.

One Mind spontaneously unfolds itself to create within itself the world of existences, of our existence. It can be said that this is how *IT* illuminates *ITSELF* in *ITSELF*. It is in *ITSELF* that *IT* gives life to the multiplicity of beings and phenomena.

One Mind can produce nothing other than its Own nature, since it is One. It is free from any intention concerning beings, from a will which is nothing other

than a total, involuntary love, a spontaneous vibration which is only Presence.

Master Obaku continues:

"This One Mind is the Buddha, and between the Buddha and living beings there is no difference."

Ku soku ze Shiki and Shiki soku ze Ku.

"When this Mind is 'living being', IT is in no way diminished, and when IT is Buddha it is in no way increased."

Is it possible for us to find the One Mind that we already are?

Is it possible for us to practise without expectation, abandoning all desire for reward, all idea of achieving a goal?

"For in seeking," Master Obaku continues, "human beings come to lose everything. By sending their idea of the Buddha in search of the Buddha, and their mind in search of the Mind, even obstinately for kalpas, they can come to nothing."

One Mind, Buddha, is unfolding right now in our meditation. The only thing we have to do is to become aware of it. How can we do that?

First, let us forget all identification with the 'me' and its futile daily stories.

Let us leave behind the attachment to the idea that we are the bodily form.

Let us see that most of our ideas are conditioned by the past.

Let us understand that to try to reach a particular state of mind by means of thoughts is to deviate from the truth of things and from the present moment. Let us not be deceived and led astray by the ramblings and reveries of our imagination.

Next, let us agree to enter completely into the presence of ourselves, as we are now. The inward gaze is our quality of attention directed towards what is alive in us. We direct it towards the location of a sensation, or the breath or the overall

feeling of the posture. We live this feeling over time, exploring it, meticulously, patiently. We look at the place where thoughts are born, without trying to grasp them. If a judgement is placed on this contemplation, attempting to oppose what is alive in us, we see that too.

Hishiryō is the term for this absorption in our own Mind, the recollection where the restlessness of the mind ceases, where the curtain of ignorance falls and our silent, luminous, peaceful and empty nature is revealed.

"Our nature is like empty space. It is unchanging and is never defiled. It is like the sun that illuminates the world. When it rises, its light spreads over the earth, but space is not brighter. When it sets and darkness covers the earth, space is not darkened. Light and darkness replace each other, but in its nature, space remains empty and unchanged. So it is with One Mind and living beings"

When we take refuge in One Mind, there is no reality left to find, because that Mind is Buddha. This is the zazen that the Buddhas never cease to teach, which is Presence. We have already arrived.

Saturday 12 June 2021 - Zazen 11:30 am

Master Obaku says:

"It is enough to awaken to this One Mind to have no more reality to find: such is the true Buddha."

And this True Buddha is our identity. One Mind is the absence of any particular state of mind. We realise this in a meditation that is based on nothing. That nothingness is what we can become aware of by abiding in Presence. Being nothing but Presence, One Mind is called non-mind. Neither subject nor object of meditation, neither place nor destination, neither gain nor loss, neither appearance nor form.

"Thus," says Master Obaku, "every being possesses what the great bodhisattvas express; nothing but One Mind to which one must awaken. Stay as long as you can in no-mind."

In reality there is nothing to find, but reality is not nothingness. If you have not reached no-mind, you are merely toiling away in vain."

In our meditation, when we direct our perceptive attention to the origin of our gaze, little by little the density of our physicality fades, becomes airy. The distinction between inside and outside disappears.

The thickness of our mental knots which invent the world as it seems to us, melts into a natural, luminous transparency. A silent coincidence immerses us in a feeling of timeless presence. And the inner chatter simply stops. *Hishiryō*.

This is not an intellectual understanding. It is not words or concepts that can describe the realisation of One Mind illuminating itself within ourselves.

Remember the phrase with which Master Wanshi begins the *Mokushōka*, the Song of Silent Enlightenment:

"When, in silence, all words are forgotten, That appears before you with clarity. And when you realise this, time has no limits, and this is the moment when your [true] centre comes to life. "

It is indeed practice-realisation. The [true] centre coming to life, realising that it is life, is indeed One Mind revealing itself to itself in the heart of our meditation. *Ku is shiki*.

We can feel a vibration [which is] at one and the same time both internal and universal, that permeates our physicality, our whole being, and in an instant all beings are Buddha. Here and now, the timeless moment is revealed, "as it was in the beginning", without before or after. No matter where or when, it is always the present. Life is *and* is not in this present moment. It is amazing that we can live, know and attest to this truth in our meditation itself! Now!

Master Obaku puts it this way:

"There is nothing left in our fundamental Buddhahood but an open and peaceful emptiness, a wonderful and joyful clarity, where deep and spontaneous realisation shines through directly. Everything is there, perfectly complete, nothing is missing."

In the Diamond Sutra, the Buddha declares:

"In Supreme Awakening, I have actually found nothing, for if I had found anything, the Buddha Dipamkara, (the most ancient of the great Buddhas of the past) would not have predicted my coming."

What we feel at this very moment, posture, a sense of presence and peaceful joy, fatigue, weariness, pain perhaps, is One Mind taking form, in our bodies, in our thoughts, in this vibrant energy called life.

Saturday 12 June 2021 - Zazen 7:30 pm

I relied on the teachings of Master Obaku to clarify my *kusen*. He was one of the greatest Chan masters. Disciple and successor of Master Hyakujo, another great master, he left his family home early to become a monk. He was very tall, about 2 metres, it is said. And in the middle of his forehead, a large bump which - it is also said - was caused by [his many] prostrations.

One day Hyakujo asked Obaku where he had been. Obaku replied that he had gone to pick mushrooms on Mount Ta-hsiung. Hyakujo asked him: *"Did you see a tiger?"*

Obaku immediately began to roar like a tiger. Hyakujo grabbed an axe and raised it as if he wanted to slay the tiger. Obaku suddenly slapped Hyakujo, who laughed.

Back at the monastery, Hyakujo said to the assembled monks, *"There is a tiger on Mount Ta-hsiung. Be careful, it already bit me this morning."*

With these words Hyakujo designated Obaku as his successor in the Dharma.

Even if this story sounds a bit absurd, it nevertheless resonates deeply in the minds of those who make their lives a spiritual practice.

The roar of the tiger is life, springing spontaneously beyond all reasoning. The roar resonates in the mind as dazzling evidence that manifests One Mind. Hyakujo was surprised as much by the roar as by the slap he received, and this is what he expected and tested in his disciple. No mistake, no intellectual demonstration. It is beyond words.

Hishiryo, thinking non-thinking, beyond words! It is to return to a direct relationship with ourselves, and also with others and with the world. To go within our interiority, to listen to our physical, mental and emotional feelings, to perceive clearly what our senses encounter.

Our practice is a direct, immediate and uninterpreted exploration of what *IS*, as it is, right now. Only we ourselves can become aware of the presence within ourselves of essential reality. Through the feeling of sentient awareness we experience in a concrete way One Mind. We regain ourselves.

Sunday 13 June 2021 - Zazen 8:00 am

"One cannot with the mind seek another mind," teaches Master Obaku. "Recognise One Mind in your everyday consciousness, because while One Mind does not belong to everyday consciousness, it is not separate from it either."

Master Obaku urges us to realise that our daily life is the very expression of One Mind. Our actions, our activities are the implementation of this One Mind. We think we have to look for something special, without realising that we have never been anything other than what we are looking for, One Mind. It is our own nature and we must see that we have never been separate from it. Separation is what the discriminating mind makes us believe, driven by the imagination.

The ultimate teaching of zazen is to understand that nothing has a real existence, that nothing can be found that we don't already have, that there is nothing to lean on, that there is neither subject nor object.

"Then," says Master Obaku, "when this is understood and seen, no more erroneous thoughts are stirred up and one confirms Awakening. And when the time comes to witness the Way, it is only to One Mind itself that one bears witness."

What we experience in the zazen of the Buddhas is the timeless moment when the shell of our personal 'me' explodes and disappears, sublimated. This false identity is dissipated in the limitless space of One Mind. This is the Awakening to Emptiness. And at the same time we are penetrated, invaded by One Mind which fills us with peace and silent light.

In fact, since individual reality is no different from infinite Reality, it is One Mind itself which recognises itself, finds itself at the heart of itself. Practising zazen is not doing something, it is *Being* zazen. That is to say, to meet oneself in the unchanging Truth of the "pure Presence of Self-awareness", the words with which the Buddha spoke of his own Awakening. No one can say that this realisation is not available to them, for no one can dispute the evidence of the Presence at every moment. The Presence is unchangeable.

This Awakening to One Mind is also vision. When the veils that obscure the Mind have disappeared, the Consciousness sees, the Awakening sees, One Mind sees itself. To see is to allow ourselves to divest ourselves of this false identification with the body and mind, *Shin jin datsu raku*.

In Awakening, the vision is no longer that of an analytical, critical or polemical mental view. It is the original vision that sees the emptiness of things, of beings and of phenomena.

It is the vision of the Eye-Treasury, our own Treasure. It is the understanding-vision that *Ku* is *shiki* and *shiki* is *Ku*. All things interpenetrate - emptiness and forms, self and One Mind. Even our greedy, angry and ignorant 'me' is the expression of "*That which is*", emptiness making itself appearance in the unreal game of illusions, One Mind hiding itself in the multiplicity of phenomena.

It is this mystery which reveals itself during zazen. There is nothing else to do but to live it by letting ourselves disappear into it.

Master Obaku says it in his own way:

"If you want to know the Mystery, don't hang onto anything with your mind. When we talk about One Mind, the absolute body of the Buddha, we compare it to heaven. If you don't try to explain the sky conceptually - so that it is One Mind, the absolute body; if you don't try to explain conceptually One Mind - so that it is the sky: you will realise that there is no difference between One Mind and the sky; no difference between the Buddha and living beings; no difference between samsara and nirvana; no difference between the passions and enlightenment. Those who detach themselves from all particular characters and conditioned opinions are Buddha."

What Master Obaku explains is the content of the *Hannya Shin Gyō*.

Read this sutra often. It can only be understood in the space beyond words. It is together that we are Buddha.

'Together' is a word synonymous with One Mind.
