

Zoom Zazen - 11 September 2021

After having explained to us what zazen cannot be, Master Keizan endeavours to explain what the practice of the Buddhas is:

"The teaching can be found in zazen, but it is not an ordinary teaching. It is, rather, a direct contemplation; simply expressing life, the Way. It is the whole body that speaks. But its words do not construct sentences or discourses. Ideas come to an end, concepts are exhausted, and one single word permeates the ten directions without disturbing a single hair. Is this not the true teaching of the Buddhas and Patriarchs?"

In this contemplation, the whole body lives the posture of the Buddhas. But it is not 'my' body. It is the limitless Absolute Body which is buddha-nature, the essence of the universe which manifests, in [complete] unity with all forms of existence. In Sanskrit, the Absolute Body is called the *Dharmakāya*.

Without the body, there can be no awakening. So it must be cared for. And yet it must be forgotten. It is not our identity, since it's nothing other than appearance.

It is by abandoning ourselves to our own Presence that this ephemeral body can be forgotten. It dissolves into Presence, and awakens as the absolute Body of the Buddhas. That's what zazen is. We then realise that our Presence is neither physical nor mental. It is spontaneous, formless like the sky, nameless, which is to say: beyond the words we've created in an attempt to talk about it. There is the obviousness¹ of Presence, and what we see and perceive in it is illusion, the flow of impermanence. Not to be attached to this illusion and to let oneself be absorbed by That which sees, looks, contemplates, is the zazen of the Buddhas which Master Keizan is talking about.

He continues to develop [his theme] in the same way:

"Although we speak of 'practice', it is not something we can [actually] 'do'. The body does nothing, the mouth expounds nothing, the mind does not have to think about anything, the six senses are left to their own innocence and free spontaneity."

It sometimes takes a long time for practitioners to understand what practice without object is, [practice] without personal will, without [any] goal to reach, without method. For all the conditioning that we've 'bought into' in our life, consciously or unconsciously, implies that every action can bring us reward or profit. The zazen of the Buddhas does not produce any profit. It is the very expression of *That Which Is*.

One master hits the target directly with this statement:

"Why continue to travel and wander here and there, when you [yourself] are the destination?"

It is a question that, once again, brings us back to zazen and the obviousness of our own Presence. Presence is always already there, first, before any word we could [possibly] say. Without Presence we cannot speak a single word, we cannot utter a single thought or make a single movement. It is to this original place, our homeland, that zazen brings us back, in a silent, unlimited immobility where everything is born and dies endlessly.

Presence is everywhere, without any sense of individuality, or 'me'. This is the ultimate reality to which zazen invites us, and where we agree to let ourselves be absorbed. There is nothing to do, nothing to understand, nothing to look for. Presence is the obviousness of the timeless now. It cannot know its own existence. Presence is freedom itself.

To simply enter the intimacy of Presence requires no special quality, no effort, no need to do [anything]. Simply *Shikantaza*, leave your heart-mind open and enter the landscape of your own everyday, raw Reality.

All that our eyes see is illusion. That by which we see is Reality, the Treasure of the Eye.

¹ or, perhaps, 'self-evident fact' (Ed.)