

Zoom Zazen Asquins 16 Oct 2021

For this first kusen of the Asquins sesshin, I take up the continuation of Master Keizan's *Zazen Yojinki*, "Recommendations for the practice of zazen".

It is about discipline, *Shila* in Sanskrit, which in fact designates the precepts, a subject of prime importance for any practitioner of Buddhism. What the Buddha taught, right from the very start of his teachings after his Enlightenment, is an attitude, a way of life and a behaviour conducive to ending suffering and achieving enlightenment. The Buddha states:

"It is necessary to find a certain discipline of mind, because an undisciplined mind always finds some pretext to act selfishly and inconsistently. When the mind lacks discipline, the body, too, is undisciplined, and so is speech and action."

"You are the master and you are also the way. Do you need to look further? Just as a merchant trains a noble horse, so it is that you must master yourself."

To become master of yourself, you need discipline. That means "being a disciple of the Way", accepting things as they are. *Just as they are*. *Inmo*, this is how it is. In our zazen, this means the end of the dualism between practice and practitioner, between *That which sees* and *that which is seen*, between exterior and interior. Everything is Mind-only. This is the single theme of the *Hannya shin gyo*: *Ku is shiki* and *shiki is Ku*. And this is the heart of zazen.

"In general," says Master Keizan, "the discipline is to avoid doing evil deeds and to prevent evil from appearing."

This is the first of the three Pure Precepts. A precept that contains, in fact, all the moral codes,

"And these Pure Precepts are the refuge, the root, the source of the rules and moral law that all the Buddhas follow," says Master Keizan in the Kyojukaimon, "Commentaries on How to Teach and Transmit the Precepts".

During zazen we can see in our own minds the emergence and unfolding of thoughts and intentions that contain evil, and the suffering that follows it. This is played out in our own obsessive, conditioned thoughts. By involving ourselves in them and reacting to them, we create for ourselves the barriers, judgements and opinions that imprison us. Faced with this

continual welling-up of thoughts that disturb and divide us, only our imperturbable gaze frees us. Master Keizan continues:

"In zazen, everything is seen as non-dual, in a total interdependence with all other things."

Unconditional acceptance of *That Which Is*, impermanence and interdependence. We are invited to let go of the unhealthy habit of believing that our happiness comes from some objective experience, a reward we covet or a situation we attempt to avoid. This attitude of acceptance leads us to the ultimate opportunity we have now, to turn the mind around on itself and investigate its own true nature. This is what happens naturally during zazen, if we follow Master Keizan's advice:

"Detach yourself from your many worries and stop getting involved in worldly affairs, and even in [something we call] Buddhism. Let go of all attachment to the Way as well as to your habitual concerns."

There's nothing in the present moment that we can grasp. And even if our present thoughts ruminate on our memories or try to construct our future, they disappear as they came, in this ungraspable present. We learn not to involve ourselves in the entrapping energy of multiple thoughts and experiences, for it is a painful and endless game. We learn to turn our attention around and direct it, not to what appears and disappears, but to the *still Source* of our own Mind. This is what it means to go beyond contradictions and remain within ourselves, in the non-duality of One-Mind.

"When you stand beyond contradictions, without affirmation or negation," continues Master Keizan, "what could hinder you?"

In this turning inward of the gaze - one could also call it renunciation - our suffering loses its obsessive character and our interest turns towards the one who suffers, the one who experiences suffering. The 'me' that resides in the mind turns towards its own essence, gradually stripping itself of its representations, its limitations, in order to dissolve itself in the limitless peace of One-Mind.

Master Keizan concludes:

"This is the formless discipline of the field of the Mind, the Pure Precepts."
