

## Zazen Zoom - 11 December 2021

*"Turning the Wheel of the Dharma: all this comes from the power of zazen," says Master Keizan.*

The Great Awakening of the Buddha was when he realised in his heart the absolute evidence of being in unity with all beings and the whole universe. No more separate entity, no more individual self ['me']. This unity means to say that beings, forms and phenomena are one and the same essence, both in *and* in spite of their infinite multiplicity. "*Ku soku ze shiki*".

This essence we call: buddha-nature, emptiness, Presence, Absolute Reality, the Pinnacle of Reality. It is our true identity. In the silence of zazen, through perceiving it in the impermanence of forms, we become aware that it is also what we are, and that it is also this very zazen itself. Awakening-Presence!

This intimate understanding of the unity of essence and forms provokes the natural desire to help others to acquire this same understanding, to reach the other side. It is the root of the bodhisattva's compassion and is born through the power of zazen.

To teach beings is to turn the Wheel of the Dharma, *Tenborin*. This is the name of our *sangha* because it means that we are committed to practice, realisation and teaching. Awakening cannot be kept to oneself, it is the final destination of all existences, the inevitable return of Awareness recognising itself in its own light. What is realised during zazen belongs to all beings. It cannot be individual, or an object of possession, or a result to be attained. Our zazen extends to the farthest reaches of the cosmos.

The Wheel of the Dharma symbolises the propagation of the Buddha's teaching, the Dharma, and - of course - only the bodhisattvas keep it turning by sharing their understanding and giving their advice and compassion.

The first turning of the Law took place when Buddha, after his Awakening, gave his first sermon in the Deer Park [at Benares]. In

memory of this event, representations of the Wheel are sometimes framed by two gazelles. This is the Benares sermon, the sermon on the Four Noble Truths, which describes the mechanism of attachment, of desire, of suffering and of liberation through the Noble Eightfold Path (the eight spokes of the Wheel). One cannot not study it.

The second turning is the teaching of either the *Abhidharma* or the *Prajñâpâramitâ* (*Perfection of Wisdom*) - one of the founding texts of the Mahâyâna. The third turning of the Law is the teaching of a sutra called the *Maha Vairocana*, an essential text of Tantric Buddhism, the Buddha *Vairocana* having as their symbol the Wheel of Dharma.

In fact, the Wheel of Dharma turns every time we re-read, recite, teach the fundamental principles enunciated by the Buddha: impermanence, interdependence, the absence of an individual 'me', Emptiness ... and talk about it to others.

It is from this silent understanding of zazen that the Dharma is transmitted, in addition to the saving actions of the Buddha leading beings towards Awakening.

This is what Master Dogen says in the *Tenbôrin* chapter of the *Shôbôgenzô*:

*"What is called the Turning of the Law designates the mode of existence of the Enlightened Ones and the Patriarchs.*

*"The rotation of the Wheel of the Law, therefore, means to study the Way with ingenuity, not to leave the forest during one's entire life and to practice on the long platform for seated meditation."*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tanahashi, [Ed.] *Shobogenzo*, Shambhala renders this:

*Turning the dharma wheel is to practice without separating from the monastery for a whole lifetime, to ask for instructions, and to wholeheartedly engage the way on the sitting platform*