

Zoom Zazen - 15 January 2022

Master Keizan continues the *Zazen Yojinki* with pragmatic recommendations on the practice of zazen. They are similar to those formulated by Master Dogen in the *Fukanzazengi*, the *Zazenshin* or the *Zazengi*. They are maxims, formulae, rules of conduct and behaviour that we have to follow when we decide to practice zazen and follow the Buddha Way. They have been taught and practiced from the [time of the] Buddha until today, from master to disciple, without interruption. They are our true Transmission. They are the pivot points on which we construct the mountain of our posture. They are the needle that pierces and allows us to penetrate the interior.

There is no Awakening without practice. There is no practice without adopting the posture, without the discipline of the precepts and the rules.

"To practice zazen," says Master Keizan, "find a quiet place and put a thick zafuton there. Protect this place from wind, smoke, rain and dew; let it be clean and have enough room for your knees.

"In ancient times, some people sat on diamond seats and others had a large stone for a zafu. Where you sit should be neither too light during the day nor too dark at night. It should be warm in winter and cool in summer. This is the right [correct] method, the key.

The recommendations of both Master Dogen and Master Keizan are simple, practical and realistic. We frequently have to call them to mind. They show a great compassion and a great respect for the freedom of each practitioner. There's no question of constraint or performance as some perfectionists believe. Rather, they are primarily an incentive to be kind with respect to oneself and one's own body.

A lot of Western practitioners lock themselves into an illusory effort and remain conditioned by the idea of an outcome; of a price to be paid to reach awakening; of a pure, tough Zen which, in the end, damages the joints and retains pointless, detrimental tensions in the body and in the mind.

I can't help but recall once again the words of the Buddha: *"Any suffering (or pain) that one inflicts on oneself is pointless as long as the feeling of the 'me' [the self] remains."*

In the teaching of the Masters, there is certainly rigour, the love of discipline and of the precepts, steadfastness and even sometimes severity when a disciple is negligent and lazy. But there is also a lot of love and kindness, of respect and of understanding of the weaknesses and obstacles by which disciples are faced and that the masters themselves have experienced and overcome.

The recommendations on posture must be respected, as well as adapted to each person. The time of meditation is the time of returning to silence and stillness, so that our gaze can return to its source, so that all that constitutes the 'me' is unmasked and that our empty, luminous nature is revealed.

So, forgetting and abandoning the self, we simply follow the guidance of our masters in complete confidence and complete humility.

The final word in this *kusen* returns to the Buddha, speaking about meditation: *"It is necessary to follow a certain discipline of body and mind, because a softened body and an undisciplined mind always find pretexts to act egotistically and in an inappropriate manner. When the mind lacks discipline, the body, too, is undisciplined and vice versa. If the ideas and methods are wrong, one can gain nothing whatever from meditation.*

"Someone who meditates with a healthy attitude, with right attention and presence of mind, whether they expect anything or not, will gain profound vision. It is like filling a bowl with oil seeds and pressing them; extracting milk from a cow's udder or pouring cream into a mixing bowl and churning it. This is the right method [way]."
