

Zoom Zazen - Saturday 26 Feb 2022

Let's pick up again the words of Master Keizan:

"The Buddha sat upright; Bodhidharma sat facing the wall for nine years. Both of them put the totality of their hearts into it.

"Sekito [Kisen] was like a dead tree. [Tendo] Nyojo would strike the sleeping disciples in the dojo with his sandal."

The example of the Buddha and of our Transmission masters should encourage us to be more persistent and rigorous in our practice of the Way.

We know the unshakeable determination of the Buddha during his ascetic life, then his constant immobility under the Bodhi tree, his unbending confrontation with the armies of Mara, until his awakening. Likewise that of Bodhidharma who remained motionless for nine years in front of the wall. His practice is called *Menpeki*, a term which has become practically synonymous with zazen in our school.

Master Sekito [Kisen] and Master Baso were neighbours, each living on a separate mountain. They exchanged disciples to encourage them to deepen their understanding of Zen. At the time it was said in the monasteries that anyone who had not met them remained ignorant. In Chinese the name of Sekito was *Shih-t'ou*, which means 'Rocky Peak'. Master Baso recommended great vigilance to his disciples by pointing out the slippery aspect of the Rocky Peak, thus expressing his immense respect for Sekito's practice. It is to Sekito that we owe the beautiful text of the *Sandokai*.

Master Nyojo, Dogen's master, would strike the sleeping disciples in the dojo with his sandal, shouting the famous formula '*Shin jin datsu raku*', which thoroughly shook Dogen and awakened him: '*Strip off your entire body and mind*', which is the letting-go of all identification with the bodily form, with the thinking mind, and with the illusory 'me' [self].

All of these masters '*put the totality of their hearts*' into a practice that was unwavering, so as to find the truth of the real nature of things and of beings. And it's *their* example that still supports us to this day.

They all strove to contemplate unceasingly. And it is their striving, their mind of awakening, that has brought about the wonderful practice that illuminates our inner selves and leads to freedom.

So, if we are the true children of the Buddhas, we must commit all our determination to realising the Way of *Thusness* - a word that expresses emptiness, *Reality as it IS*, the unity of oneself and the universe. And it is *right now* that this is accomplished, in this very posture that every one of our masters practised.

The children of the Buddhas put all their energy into practising this *Thusness* - which is the tip of the sword of Great Wisdom, the summit, the pinnacle of *Reality*. And they learn to allow, in their meditation, this Great Wisdom to wipe out conditioned opinions, anger and negative emotions - the vicious circle of beliefs that makes them believe things are permanent and that they possess enduring substance.

For this, says the Brahma's Net Sutra, they require discipline and the Precepts. In the *Jukai* chapter of the Shobogenzo Master Dogen writes:

"The multitude of the Enlightened have observed discipline with vigour and purity, and thus they have abandoned their fascination for the threefold world of desires. Since this is so, what surpasses everything in the study of Zen and the search for the Way is none other than the precepts and discipline.

"If one does not turn away from one's own faults, if one does not avoid bad conduct - how can one realise the Buddha-Way and transmit the true Law?"

So, put simply, let's follow the example of our masters and put our whole hearts into this present moment, where the ungraspable truth of things and existence unfolds.
