

Zazen Zoom - Saturday 6 August 2022

"After coming out of the immobility of zazen," continues Master Keizan, "sustain this state in your activities, without thinking, without hesitation. What comes to you in the present moment is the koan. When practice and realization are uncomplicated, the koan is simply the present moment. What is before the appearance of anything, what is on the other side of what is subject to the erasure of time, is just that one reality from which the activity of the Buddhas and the Ancient Awakened Ones springs."

The *koan* is to create daily life from the non-action of zazen. This is the *koan* of Zen. Existence comes into being, appears, in what is emptiness without a trace of duality (*Ku soku ze shiki*). Only attention guides us in the flow of life, the attention which is our gaze itself, which we maintain **right before** the appearance of things.

Effortlessly, the eyes see, the ears hear and you feel the contact of your pelvis with the zafu. There's no need for someone, a self, to register what we see, hear or feel. Established in *That which is* the present moment, any effort to be, to see, hear and feel is totally superfluous and unnecessary.

"Listen and watch as if you were newborn," says Master Bankei. "It will always be like hearing or seeing for the first time. If you have no preconceived ideas in your mind, at the slightest sound, at the slightest word, that will be for you complete realization."

Master Bankei speaks appositely of holding oneself in the moment **before** a thought, a sound, a thing appears in our luminous, perceptive mind. Since we *are* the entire buddha-nature - rather than seeking to *become* a Buddha or to *attain* an awakening that would give us importance - nothing seems simpler than taking the shortcut of simply holding ourselves in the *unborn*: which is to say, in the [condition] *before* anything appears.

And every time that something appears in the field of perception, you see it, hear it, feel it.

"This is the proof that the Buddha-nature is always already there," says Master Bankei. "There is no deliberate effort to see, hear, feel. You are nothing other than buddha-nature. As simply as blinking your eye, you can - at any moment - return to your true nature, the unborn."

This effortless gaze of the *unborn* and this unconditional openness can be brought to bear on every action of our daily lives, on every one of our feelings. However, whether our attention is engaged or not, what is happening is always the manifestation of the buddha-nature.

The moment before thought appears, without effort, watching, hearing, feeling, contemplating is already happening. Why add a self that does all this? This *self* has never looked at anything; it has quite simply appropriated this looking, this listening, this meditation?

There is no one who does, neither me nor some mysterious entity, nor Buddha. All things appear and disappear spontaneously without '*self*'.

If we understand deeply during our meditation the uselessness of all effort then we are freed from the process of becoming. And we realise that any effort to attain what we already *are* simply takes us further away from it.

Like a mirror. It has no conscious intention, no thought that wants to reject or grasp the things that happen to be reflected in it. That's how the bright mirror is. The buddha-nature, our true face, our homeland is a hundred times, a thousand times, a million times brighter than a mirror.

In the mirror of the mind, the koan that Master Keizan speaks of cannot be other than the elusive present moment. The mirror and its reflections *are* Presence.
