

Zoom Zazen Saturday 19 October 2024

Last week's *kusen* ended with this sentence: '*Not to latch onto things is to leave yourself completely open to living and understanding the truth of Zen.*'

'*Do not grasp!*' This was the Buddha's first and greatest exhortation. It appears in his first sermon in Benares on the subject of the Four Noble Truths. All our masters have constantly reiterated this crucial piece of advice:

"When you grasp things, the Buddha teaches, it is because of a 'thirst'. You should drop that, and drop it completely. It doesn't matter what you grasp. As soon as you grasp [something] you are [already] in the process of losing your freedom."

What's the origin of this thirst that provokes [our] desire to grasp?

We've known for thousands of years that losing our freedom is unbearable. But do we understand that this loss is inseparable from the insatiable thirst that consumes human beings and produces suffering? If we don't recognise our pure, luminous nature, we identify ourselves with an illusion that we call 'me'. Imprisoned in this illusion, blinded by the glittering array of objects that manifest, we have lost our minds and are desperately seeking to quench our thirst by possessing things. In vainly trying to grasp them, we maintain the illusion that the happiness that we imagine is [actually] attainable. This is how beings spin endlessly on the wheel of Samsara, wandering perpetually.

We practise zazen, and we can see in our own minds what it means to *grasp* and *who* it is that grasps. To see [this] will put an end to our fears and doubts, and fill us with unalterable peace. Our own nature is Mind. And this Mind is free, with no need to grasp anything whatsoever. Insofar as we're able to attribute to it the slightest intention, *grasping* is just not something that the Mind does. Each of us can confirm this during zazen. Can our Mind take hold of the cry of a bird, the density of a sensation - even the reality of a thought?

In its original purity, the Mind has no desire to grasp. How could something that *is* all that is and that *we are*, want to grasp or possess objects, things, or even the illusions that it produces within Itself, and that also are, by nature, empty? The Mind cannot possess or *grasp* something that is its *own* creation. That's the truth! But when It identifies with the illusion of the self ['me'] that It *Itself* produces, It fools Itself, seeming to separate Itself *from* Itself. This separation is impossible, because in fact the Mind is *everything that is*. Our mistake is to believe it to be real!

In the *Shin Jin Mei*, Master Sosan tells us:

*"The One itself is all things.
All things themselves are One."*

If all things are One, then where could there possibly be a mistake?

Master Wanshi said the same thing to the monks in his temple:

"The Way goes and comes under the protection of the Mind. Such is the original principle."

But if all of a sudden you grasp a single thread, if you cling to a single twig, the mind that guides you is paralysed, can no longer flow. The path is then blocked and you can no longer travel it."

Emptiness, just as it is, contains all existences. And when existence becomes existence, it is in total unity with pure emptiness'.

Ku soku ze shiki and *shiki soku ze Ku* - that's all we need to understand, right at the heart of our zazen. Surrendering completely to the pure Presence of the awareness of self allows us, in all simplicity, to access this truth.
