

Zazen-Yojinki: Points to Keep in Mind When Practicing Zazen (1)

By Zen master Keizan Jokin

Chant leader alone –

Points to Keep in Mind When Practicing Zazen

All together –

Zazen means to clarify the mind-ground and dwell comfortably in your actual nature. This is called revealing yourself and manifesting the original-ground.

In zazen both body and mind drop off. Zazen is far beyond the form of sitting or lying down. Free from considerations of good and evil, zazen transcends distinctions between ordinary people and sages, it goes far beyond judgments of deluded or enlightened. Zazen includes no boundary between sentient beings and buddha. Therefore put aside all affairs, and let go of all associations. Do nothing at all. The six senses produce nothing.

What is this? Its name is unknown. It cannot be called “body,” it cannot be called “mind.” Trying to think of it, the thought vanishes. Trying to speak of it, words die. It is like a fool, an idiot. It is as high as a mountain, deep as the ocean. Without peak or depths, its brilliance is unthinkable, it shows itself silently. Between sky and earth, only this whole body is seen.

This one is without comparison - he has completely died. Eyes clear, he stands nowhere. Where is there any dust? What can obstruct such a one?

Clear water has no back or front, space has no inside or outside. Completely clear, its own luminosity shines before form and emptiness were fabricated. Objects of mind and mind itself have no place to exist.

This has always already been so but it is still without a name. The the third patriarch, great teacher, temporarily called it “mind,” and the venerable Nagarjuna once called it “body.” Enlightened essence and form, giving rise to the bodies of all the Buddhas, it has no “more” or “less” about it.

This is symbolized by the full moon but it is this mind which is enlightenment

itself. The luminosity of this mind shines throughout the past and brightens as the present. Nagarjuna used this subtle symbol for the samadhi of all the Buddhas but this mind is signless, non-dual, and differences between forms are only apparent.

Just mind, just body. Difference and sameness miss the point. Body arises in mind and, when the body arises, they appear to be distinguished. When one wave arises, a thousand waves follow; the moment a single mental fabrication arises, numberless things appear. So the four elements and five aggregates mesh, four limbs and five senses appear and on and on until the thirty-six body parts and the twelve-fold chain of interdependent emergence. Once fabrication arises, it develops continuity but it still only exists through the piling up of myriad dharmas.

The mind is like the ocean waters, the body like the waves. There are no waves without water and no water without waves; water and waves are not separate, motion and stillness are not different. So it is said, “A person comes and goes, lives and dies, as the imperishable body of the four elements and five aggregates.”

Now, zazen is entering directly into the ocean of buddha-nature and manifesting the body of the Buddha. The pure and clear mind is actualized in the present moment; the original light shines everywhere. The water in the ocean neither increases nor decreases, and the waves never cease. Buddhas have appeared in this world for the sake of the one great matter; to show the wisdom and insight of the Buddha to all living beings and to make their entry possible. For this, there is a peaceful and pure way: zazen. This is nothing but the samadhi, in which all buddhas receive and use themselves as buddhas. It is also called the king of samadhis. If you dwell in this samadhi for even a short time, the mind-ground will be directly clarified. You should know that this is the true gate of the buddha-way.

If you wish to clarify the mind-ground, you should relinquish your various types of limited knowledge and understanding. Throw away both worldly affairs and buddha-dharma. Eliminate all delusive emotions. When the true mind of the sole reality is manifest, the clouds of delusion will clear away and the moon of the mind will shine brightly.

The Buddha said, “Listening and thinking are like being outside of the gate; zazen is returning home and sitting in peace.” How true this is! When we are listening and thinking, the various views have not been put to rest and the mind is still running over. Therefore other activities are like being outside of the gate. Zazen alone brings everything to rest and, flowing freely, reaches everywhere. So zazen is like returning home and sitting in peace.

The delusions of the five obstructions all arise out of basic ignorance. Being ignorant means not clarifying yourself. To practice zazen is to throw light on yourself. Even though the five obstructions are eliminated, if basic ignorance is not eliminated, you are not a buddha-ancestor. If you wish to eliminate basic ignorance, zazen practice of the way is the key.

An ancient master said, “When delusive thoughts cease, tranquility arises; when tranquility arises, wisdom appears; when wisdom appears, reality reveals itself.” If you want to eliminate delusive thoughts, you should cease to discriminate between good and evil. Give up all affairs with which you are involved; do not occupy your mind with any concerns nor become physically engaged in any activity. This is the primary point to bear in mind. When delusive objects disappear, delusive mind falls away...