

“The Whip for a Good Horse (*Kaibaben*)” by Torei Enji (1721-1792). Torei was one of the main heirs of the great Rinzai master Hakuin Ekaku. “The Whip” was a letter written in 1755 to a lay practitioner who was a samurai. This translation is by Trevor Leggett and appears in his book “Three Ages of Zen.”

“In what Zen calls the ascent from the state of the ordinary vulgar man to the state of Buddha, there are five requirements. First is the principle that they have the same nature. Second is the teaching that they are dyed different colors. Third is the necessity for furious effort. Fourth is the principle of continuity of training. Fifth is the principle of returning to the origin. These five are taught as the main elements of the path.

The true nature with which people are endowed, and the fundamental nature of the Buddhas of the three worlds, are not two. They are equal in their virtue and majesty; the same light and glory are there. The wisdom and wonderful powers are the same. It is like the radiance of the sun illuminating mountains and rivers and the whole wide earth, lighting up the despised manure just as much as gold and jewels. But a blind man may stand pathetically in that very light, without seeing it or knowing anything about it.

Though the fundamental nature of all the Buddhas and of living beings is the same and not distinct, their minds are looking in quite different directions. The Buddha faces inward and makes the heart-essence (*hon-shin*) shine forth. The ordinary man faces outward, and is concerned with the ten thousand things.

For what he likes, he develops strong desire; for what he does not like, he develops hatred; when his thinking becomes rigid, he becomes stupefied. Bewildered by one of these Three Poisons, he turns into a clutching ghost, or a fighting demon ablaze with fury, or an animal. When they are equally mixed in him, he falls into hell, where he suffers in many ways. These are

called the Four Evil States, and they are dreadful. If despite his greed and anger and dullness, he does control himself at least to some extent, he becomes human. Life after life he holds on in human form. Then, although still not having cut off greed and anger and delusion altogether, the self-control being incomplete, he is born—selfish as he still is—in some paradise. There are six of these so-called Heavens of Desire. Then when the fundamental nature of the Three Poisons had been annihilated, meditation and wisdom manifest in him; but his meditation is on Love, and residual traces of anger and apathy remain. So he is born somewhere in the Eighteen Worlds-without-form, where dwell the Truth-Hearers and the Buddhas-for-themselves-alone. All the states first described—the four bad ones, the human, and the heavenly ones—when taken together comprise the Six Paths of the World-Process. If we now add to them the Truth-Hearers, the Buddhas-for-themselves-alone, bodhisattvas, and the Buddhas, it comes to a total of ten.

Generally speaking, out of the Six Paths, pleasures might seem to be experienced in the human world or in a heavenly one, but in fact it is all pain. How is this? It is because these worlds are based on hearts deeply sunk in the agonies of greed, anger, and dullness, and experienced by them as such. So if passions are not lessened, there is no escape from the Six Worlds of Suffering. If they are not escaped, there can never be real peace and happiness.

If one wants to get out of the worlds of suffering, first of all one has to realize how they are all the time passing away. What is born, inevitably dies. Youth cannot be depended on, power is precarious, wealth and honor crumble away. High status requires constant vigilance to preserve it. The longest life hardly gets beyond eighty years. Since therefore it is all melting away, there is nothing enjoyable about it. The badly off suffer from not having things; the well-off suffer from having them. The high suffer from being highly placed, and the despised suffer from being lowly placed. There is suffering connected with clothes and food, suffering with the family, suffering from wealth and possessions, suffering from official rank.

So long as the nature is not freed from passions, and the path of seeking release has not been found, then even supposing there were some king and his ministers, glorious like a god among living sages, it would all be insubstantial like a lightning flash or a dewdrop under the morning sun—gone in a moment.

When karma happens to be favorable, these things appear solid enough, but as the favorable karma dissipates, it turns out there was never anything there at all. By favor of the karma of our parents we have got this body, and by favor of the earth, the skin and flesh and sinew and bones grow. By favor of water, the blood and body fluids come, and by favor of fire, warmth, harmony, softness, and order come to be. By favor of winds, vitality, breath, movement, and change come about. If these four favorable karmas suddenly become exhausted, then breathing ceases, the body is cold, and there is nothing to be called “I.” It was only ever a rented accommodation.

However clingingly attached to this temporary abode one cannot expect it to last forever. To realize the Four Noble Truths, that all this is passing, painful, empty, and without a self, and to seek the way of bodhi-intelligence, is what we call the Dharma of Hearing the Noble Truths.

If you would grasp the nature of the universal body of all the Buddhas, first you must be clear about, and then you must enlighten, the roots of ignorance in you. How is it to be made clear? You must search after your true nature. How to search? In the eye, seeing of colors; in the ear, hearing of sounds; in the body, feeling distinctions of heat and cold; in the consciousness, feelings of wrong and right: all these must be seen clearly as they are. This seeing and hearing and knowing is at the root of the practice. The ordinary man sees colors and is deluded by colors, hears voices and is deluded by voices, feels heat and cold and is deluded by heat and

cold, knows right and wrong and is deluded by right and wrong. This is what is meant by the saying: “the ordinary man looks outward.”

The training of a bodhisattva is: when looking at some color, to ask himself what it is that is being seen; when hearing some sound, to ask himself what it is that is being heard; when feeling hot or cold, to ask himself what it is that is being felt; when distinguishing wrong from right, to ask himself what it is that is being known. This is called the “facing inward of the Buddhas.” Practicing it is different from facing in the direction in which the ordinary man looks. At first, though facing the same way as the Buddhas, the Buddha power and wisdom are not manifest in him. But still, he is a baby bodhisattva, and he must realize that he has come into that company. If he always keeps to his great vow to the Buddhas, praying to the spiritual lights and being loyal to the teacher, then one day the Great Thing comes about, and he is set free in the ocean of Own-good is Others’ good.

When you get up in the morning, however much business there may be waiting, first affirm this one thought, first turn to this meditation on seeing and hearing. After that, engage in the activities of the day. When going to have a meal or a drink, first of all you must try to bring this one thought to the fore, and make a meditation on it. When you go to wash your hands, first you should try to bring this thought uppermost to your mind and meditate on it. When last thing at night you are going to lie down, sit for a little bit on the bedclothes and try to bring this thought to the fore and meditate; then lie down to sleep. This is practicing the true path of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Whip up your enthusiasm for it by realizing how if you fail to grasp your true nature as one with the nature of Buddha, you will be lost in the wheel of continual rebirth, circling endlessly in the Four Births and Six Worlds.

From the beginning, you must learn to put your whole heart into this basic meditation, going ahead with each thought and practicing on each occasion as it comes up. Keep up the right

line of the meditation: when you walk, practice while walking; when you sit still, practice while sitting; when talking to people, practice while talking. When there is no talking and things are quiet, then you can meditate more intensely. When you look at things, ask yourself what it is that you see; when you hear things, ask yourself what it is that you hear. When things get very rushed so that you easily get swept away by them, ask yourself what this is, that you should get swept away by it. And even if you do get swept away, don't give up your meditation. If you get ill, use the pain as the seed-subject for your meditation.

In every circumstance, the meditation must go forward in a straight line, however much business there may be. It is not allowable that the meditation should be vivid and clear only when the surroundings are familiar and quiet. Unless the meditation is bright and clear at all times, it cannot be said to have power. If there is an outbreak of armed strife in a country which has to be stopped, at the critical time it is a question of taking to the field, confronting the dangers, and fighting fearlessly without ever thinking of turning back—that is the way to victory. The meditation-fight is the same. It is just when you are caught up in situations where your thoughts are disturbed, that there is a chance to win a decisive victory.

Be aware of this heart of yours. See that it does not weaken, and go forward. In fact when things are quiet, it corresponds to the time when warriors are safe within the castle, when they must train themselves in tactics and strategy. They practice with courage and sincerity. When the country is disturbed by armed uprisings, they know that this is the time to go out to the field of battle and decide the issue. You must meditate with just such a strong resolve. You may not have the power of the Buddhas yet, but you are one of those who are on the Way of all the Buddhas.

It is a fact that little enlightenment obstructs great enlightenment. If you give up any little enlightenment you may have, and do not clutch it to yourself, then you are sure to get great

enlightenment. If you stick at the little enlightenment and will not give it up, you are sure to miss the great enlightenment. It is like someone who sticks to little profits, and so misses the big ones. But if he does not hang on to little profits, he will surely be able to get big ones. When the little profits are not clung to, but invested bit by bit, it does end in a big profit. Similarly, if you stick to the little profit of little enlightenment, so that the whole life is a succession of experiences of little enlightenments, you will never be able to reach the great freedom, the great release. If you don't find the way to the great freedom through great enlightenment, your individual applications (*ji*) will not accord with the great principle (*ri*), and you will fall into the wrong views of outsiders-away-from-Buddhism. It is terrible. But if, when you have a little enlightenment, you take that as a seed and go forward steadily, further and further with your practice, then the great profit of all the Buddhas becomes fully manifest. You will naturally pass through the barrier-riddles (*kansho*) set by the patriarchs. Now indeed, individual application and universal principle are in accord, action and understanding are not separate. You attain the state of great release, the great freedom. It is for this that stress is laid on maintaining the practice.

Now when you have penetrated into the true wholly, all the powers of the Way are brought to fulfillment, all beings everywhere are blessed whenever any opening presents itself. Though you may indeed preach and teach, really there is nothing lacking: "I" and the others all attain the shore of the fourfold Nirvana.

Through the great operation of the great vow, beings and worlds benefit themselves as well as others, and you must resolve never to turn away from it in the future. In the present meantime, there may be mistakes and lapses; legs are weak and the path slippery. If you don't get up when you've fallen down, surely you'll be destroyed. You will die where you've fallen. But if, through falling, you pull yourself up, and falling again, pull yourself up again, and so go ahead further and further, finally you do reach the goal. The sutra says: "If you have broken a

commandment, make your repentance before the Buddha at once: then go forward along the way.”

Intensifying the meditation practice in the way described, when the practice becomes clear and mature, you finally return to his nature, one with that of all the Buddhas. This is what they call Becoming Buddha. When it is said in Zen, See the Nature to Be Buddha, this is what is meant. At the beginning, owing to the one delusion, the True Nature (*Hon-shin*) which should face inward, is made to circle outwardly in the Six Paths: of hell, clutching ghosts, animals, demons, men, and heavens, rising and sinking like the rim of a chariot wheel through thousands of lives in millions of world-cycles, interminably. The bones of birth after birth would pile up higher than mountain peaks, and the life-blood would overflow the great ocean. So teaches the Buddha. Now having achieved human birth, hard to attain, and having come across his holy doctrine, rarely to be found, and of that doctrines to be able to hear the wonderful truth called the Mahayana, such is to be reckoned the most fortunate of beings. If you fail to take it up or openly reject it, that must be reckoned the greatest of sins. Once lost, it is as difficult to regain the human birth as it would be for a thread lowered from the highest heaven to enter the eye of a needle on the bottom of the ocean.

And the circling in the Six Paths is not just a question of reincarnation. In one single day here people are rising and sinking in it. When the heart is right and avoids wrong, that is a man. When others oppose him and hatred for them arises, that is a furious demon. When one has sticking attachment for what one likes, he becomes a clutching ghost. When the heart gets stuck in thinking of material things, he is an animal. If, even though he does think deeply, attachment is strong, if the flames of anger do not cease, and he seeks to injure others, then he is in hell. All this is losing the path of humanity and sowing the seeds of the Three Poisons. Then again there may be a time when the heart is peaceful, not thinking about material things, and there is inner purity; now, though in a human body, his heart is truly said to be sporting in

heaven. But in general, people do not realize how they are circling in the Six Paths in a single day. In fact those who attain to human-heartedness are few, what to say of sporting in heaven? Most are sporting in the Three Poisons of animal materialism, ghost hankering, and demon hatred. If they change at all, it is mostly to fall into the paths of hell, tormenting others and destroying everything. See the paths in which we are reincarnating in the course of just one day!

At first, the heart is on the wrong path two-thirds of the time, with the human being barely holding on to one third. Then again hell comes up in it. So it is that living an ordinary life, it is difficult to get away from those wrong paths. But if in the course of the day there arises some resolve at practice, of the Four Principles of the Truth-Hearers, or the doctrine of Twelve Links of Dependence of the Lone Buddhas, or the Six Perfections of the Bodhisattva Way, then in that heart, seeds of the Three Poisons will be destroyed. He who strives to intensify his practice, finally attains realization; even before he does so, since the poisons in the heart have ceased, he will pass beyond temporary joys of human and heavenly worlds, and ascend to the higher state. Truth-hearers and Solitaries are already noble, what to say of one on the path of the bodhisattva? That path is already so difficult to attain, what to say of the dharma of the Buddha Way? The Zen realization of Seeing the Nature is the very crown of all Buddhahood. He who has his heart set on this is already a baby Buddha. Thought after thought, he steps out toward the gate of peerless merit, along the way of holy perfection. Wonderful is the merit even of reading about such perfection, what to say of practicing it? Even to get another to read it aloud will save one from disaster of fire, so what shall we say of one who practices it himself? The Buddhas bless him, the bodhisattvas stretch out their hands to him, the gods in their heavens applaud him. At a glimpse of his shadow, demons and evil spirits are routed. Spirits imprisoned in the depths, by contact with him realize the opportunity of release. This is called the highest, noblest, and very first dharma. Step by step it must be faithfully followed out.”