

Affirming Faith in Mind (7)

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We have been going through the poem of the Third Patriarch, *Affirming Faith in Mind*. Today we want to look at the lines:

*When mind in Tao rests undisturbed, then nothing in the world offends.
And when no thing can give offense, all things at once cease to exist.
If all thought-objects disappear, the thinking-subject disappears.
For things are things because of mind, as mind is mind because of things.
These two are really just the same, and rooted in one Emptiness.
In Emptiness these are not two, and in each are all worlds contained.*

The Third Patriarch gives a brilliant exposition of the dharma in his own unique way. Every person when they have some understanding of the dharma expresses it in their own unique way. There have been so many dharma teachers and each one of them was very convincing and each one of them very valuable in their own way. People give variations on this theme and they are all very useful.

He uses the word 'Tao' as the 'Way'. He uses no Buddhist terminology in this poem. He only uses the ancient Chinese 'Way' or the 'Tao' or the 'Great Way'.

*When mind in Tao rests undisturbed, then nothing in the world offends.
And when no thing can give offense, all things at once cease to exist.*

'Giving offence' really means 'self and other'. If there is self and other there is always a tension or some kind of conflict. Even the word 'relationship' is still involving conflict because it takes two to be in a relationship. So much so that one teacher said, 'In reality there is no such thing as relationship.' 'Relationship' imposes duality — me and you, husband and wife, whatever the relationship is. There is no such thing as relationship in reality. There is no two. As he says here there is not even one. Even the word 'one' must dissolve for us to have this realisation

Even 'Oneness' disappears as he says in this poem. Even 'one' is a concept. At the end of the poem he says, no yesterday, no tomorrow, not even today, not even now because even 'now' is just a concept. That has to dissolve too. So in reality there is no thing. In the relative world there are thousands of things. There is subject and object all the time. In the essential world, the absolute realm that he is talking about there is no thing. There is no subject, no object. He says quite brilliantly here:

*If all thought-objects disappear, the thinking-subject disappears.
For things are things because of mind, as mind is mind because of things.
These two are really just the same, and rooted in one Emptiness.*

The beautiful exposition of that dharma sings like a song of enlightenment.

We can see in the history of *sadhana* or practice, there are two different strands here. Vimala Thakar and Shen Hsui in the Zen tradition talk about a gradual path. Firstly one moves into the position of the observer. We move from being a doer to an observer. We move from being a doer in a strong ego sense back into the position of being the observer. From there we observe whatever arises. And as Vimala used to say we have to keep observing. We have to keep that discipline up. Don't merge back into being a doer again, into being an achiever. Keep that position of being an observer.

It's not easy to do. It's certainly form of our *sadhana*, or spiritual practice, to stay as the observer. When we are taking the position of the observer there has to be the observed. This is an object, a thought, a thought-object. Vimala used to say when all thought objects get exhausted, then the thinking subject, the observer has no more role to play. The observer can quietly dissolve away

Who knows how long that *sadhana* could last for? We could be the observer for one year, for ten years. That *sadhana* could be lifetimes going on. I take the position of the observer until all the thought objects are exhausted then the observer can dissolve. Then there is oneness. There is no-thing.

That's one description of the Way from the point of view of gradual practice. Which is necessary. There are two famous Zen poems, one by Shen Hsui and one by Hui Neng. Shen Hsui's poem is one of gradual enlightenment through practice. Hui Neng's poem is one of sudden enlightenment. Here in our Dojo we favour sudden enlightenment. Anyone can come into the room. When they arrive they leave their thinking minds at the door with their shoes.

We come into a timeless zone here. There is no time here. As soon as we can we drop thinking mind. As soon as we enter this sacred space of the Room of the Way, the Dojo, we drop thinking mind. It can happen instantly. For Dogen Zenji thinking mind, body and mind dropped just like that [clicks fingers]. Late one night in the monastery the master said to the person next to him, zazen meditation is not about going to sleep. Suddenly Dogen had an awakening when he heard those words. It shocked him out of where he was and he had a massive awakening. Body and mind dropped away. There was no body and mind left.

What was left? That is for you to find out. If body and mind drop away what is left? We say no thing. No subject, no object is no thing. It's not nothing. No thing is what exists. It's all there is. Sitting in our practice when we begin certain thoughts will be there. After five minutes all those thoughts will be gone. The bell rings. None of the thoughts that were there at the beginning are still there. We call that thinking reality 'non-reality'. It's a dream world of thoughts. None of them are lasting. What is lasting? What is the Real? We say in Zen, 'no thing' is the Real. At the end of everything else, 'no thing' is always there which is also our most inner self nature, being-ness, awareness. This is 'no thing'. It's not a subject, it's not an object. In Zen we often say it's 'just this'. No inner, no outer no subject, no object— just this.

No thing can come upon you like that. There is no time involved. You don't have to think you have to take up the position of being the observer over endless lifetimes before all the objects of observation dissolve, then the observer can dissolve. This was Vimala Thakar's way of describing it. She was a great Indian practitioner, a follower of Krishnamurti's. She was an incredible woman and an

incredible teacher. But in actual fact, you can walk in the door out of the rain into this room here and suddenly body and mind drop away instantly, sudden awakening. There doesn't have to be time involved. In actual fact as soon as you bring time into it, nothing is going to happen because as soon as you bring time in, you are back in the cycle of birth and death. Time is thinking mind. Time is birth and death. Time means getting gradually better and better. That's all thinking mind. You have to drop thinking mind altogether. Therefore you have to drop time. How long does it take to get awakened? No time. Don't bring time in. As soon as you bring time in, five lifetimes from now we are still getting better and better, purer and purer.

Federal treasurer Joe Hockey talks about endless economic growth. More and more growth — it's the same greedy mind. I'm getting more and more enlightened, I'm getting more and more wealthy. What's the difference between those? None. There is no enlightenment there at all. There is no time. Now is the only moment to drop body and thinking mind. How do we do it? If we can give 100% attention to this moment thinking mind is not there. We can see that. If I'm in a car accident about to happen, thinking mind is not there because I have to give 100% attention.

How do you give 100% attention? As Krishnamurti used to say, there's no *how*, you just have to *do* it. You don't think in the car accident, 'how do I give 100% attention? If a snake crawls in the room you don't think, how do I give 100% attention? It just happens. The situation brings it out. There is no *how*. No technique to get 100% attention. Boiling point is reached in our practice when there is 100% attention. When I asked Aitken Roshi "How do you get more energy in the practice?" He responded, "Intensity builds".

You go out into the misty rain and you get wetter and wetter. After an hour you are soaked, incrementally you get soaked. It is only light mist yet you get soaked. You don't notice incrementally how your practice is going. A watched kettle never boils. If you are continually checking — how close am I now, how enlightened am I — you will find enlightenment is not there. You are once again caught in thinking mind, in time, in getting better and better. It's not about getting better. There is no 'better'. Better is only in the time-bound mind. I was like this yesterday, now I am getting better. That's time. It's not like that We are talking here about a timeless realization. When we bring time into it, we are getting better and better at this, that's what we do in the relative world. Like playing piano. I am getting better and better each lesson. It's not like that here in our practice. The 'real' thing is always already here. The sun is always already here. It's covered over by numerous clouds. As soon as the clouds disappear, the sun that was already here reveals itself.

The full attention, as Master Ikkyu said, is already here. Thinking mind can't exist where there is 100% attention. In that time of the accident, thinking mind dissolves. It is the first thing to go. As the driver I just have to act. The snake comes in — I have to act. There is no thinking mind in that instant. Where's the thinking mind? It's not there.

Thinking mind is so lazy. Our ancestors in the jungle all the time had to have 100% attention to survive all sorts of predators. We have become so lazy. The only time we get anywhere near 100% attention is when we enter a car.

That's the closest we will get in our daily life. It's a dangerous activity. Suddenly we are aware. Suddenly we have 'ten-direction eyes', as we say in Zen. We are not focused on a point. That point has dissolved. If I am fixated on a point in front of me I miss the whole field. With 100% attention, it is 'ten-direction eyes'. Everything is coming into view. The little old lady pedestrian, the kid on his bicycle, the truck down the road — everything gets taken in, in a single glance. You see everything in one glance.

Yasutani Roshi (1885-1973, Japan) used the example of Samurais with their swords in a battle. He described the sweat pouring down. He described them seeing the audience in the background, seeing the flash of the opponents' sword. Like the Samurai, you take everything in when thinking mind dissolves. There is 'ten-direction eyes'.

That is attention.

In our practice, awareness of inattention is attention. As soon as we notice inattention, there is attention. We don't have to try to be attentive. Yet in our practice, our effortless effort practice, we have to have the intention to be aware. It's a deep intention to be aware. That's effortless effort.

It's different to ego effort where we are grinding and grunting away which we do in our practice in the beginning. When we are learning the piano we grind and grunt away in the first few lessons. Over time something drops and there is effortless effort. The piano is playing itself. Usually though, the grunting, grinding effort is there in the beginning. It's a rough effort. We can't get away from that. Beginners often have a very rough effort.

Attention seems easy when you have tried it a lot. What was hard in the beginning comes easy. You can try it with your neighbor. If your neighbor is talking to you, try giving 100% of your attention to them. In the beginning it is a massive effort to forget your own story, to forget yourself, to forget thinking mind and just give 100% attention to someone talking to you. You become them, in that attention. You *are* them. You become them because of your attention. You will find if you do that, then the person starts unloading. An hour or two later the whole life story comes out. As soon as you give your full attention everything comes up in a person.

A friend told me she went to see Krishmurti in India. The moment she sat down with him she began to cry. She cried for an hour. She got up, left the room, full attention when it is given, everything starts to come up and unload in the human psyche.

It's the same in our zazen. Everything comes up and unloads. Hogen Zenji, came to stay with me in Lismore. A friend of mine, Leslie Holmes who is now a yoga teacher in Lismore, asked 'please can I come and meet Hogen? I have heard a lot about him'. Hogen was staying for a few days with me. I asked Hogen, and he said, 'Yes, sure that's OK'. So she came over, she walked into the house. He was on the sofa. The moment she sat down next to him she began to cry. She cried for half an hour, got up and walked out. That was the meeting. When there is the 100% attention everything starts to come up and unload. It's an interesting phenomenon.

People know. In counselling, people know when someone is there for them, they know. If the attention is 100% they can sense it. Whereas if someone you are talking to, is thinking about their own story, their own thing they have got to do in twenty minutes, or what happened twenty years ago, they are not there, are they? They are twenty years ago, or ten minutes into the future. They are not there. Once you listen fully and completely 100%, the person knows you are listening. It's when they start to unload. It starts to unfold.

It's the same in our zazen. If we are here fully doing zazen with 100% attention, things will come up. The whole psyche will start to unwind. Everything will start to come up.

Yet it needs that effort in the beginning. You can do it when you are doing your shoelaces up. Put 100% attention in doing your shoelaces up as if your life depended in it, then you will start to understand what attention is.

Remember the story of Ikkyu, when he was asked, 'What is the fundamental principle of Zen'? He answered *Attention*. They didn't believe him. And he wrote again on the ground *Attention*. They started to get annoyed, and he wrote again *Attention*. Full attention. That's putting it in a nutshell. Can you give 100% attention? Now? Because this is the only time we have. If you can do it, thinking mind drops away. Thinking mind dies and drops away with 100% attention.

What are the five hindrances in Theravadin practice? Laziness or slothfulness is one of the five hindrances. That blocks us from giving our 100% attention. Thinking mind comes in and says, 'don't worry, it's too hard, come and do it tomorrow'. Five lifetimes from now, thinking mind is still saying, 'Don't worry, it's too hard to do now, I'll do it tomorrow'. Five lifetimes.

Or thinking mind says, don't worry, you are only a poor person, let others do it for you, let Jesus do it, let Buddha do it. You are only a poor humble human being who is not up to that yet. So self-doubt is another major hindrance in Theravadin practice. You are not up to that, leave it to the great ones. You can't do that. So we worship the so-called great ones.

Our path is not about that. Zen is where you graduate and you *become* Buddha. If you meet the Buddha on the path, you kill the Buddha because the Buddha is not higher than you. It's just a concept, an image. You *become* the Buddha. That is what your self-nature is. You come up to be equal to the Buddha.

When Rinzai Zenji came in to see Hui Neng, he slapped him on the face and said, 'There is not much to your Zen after all!' and they had a laugh together. They were equals. That's what it's about. As the great Korean Zen Master, Soen Sa Nim (1927-2004, Korea) said Zen is about believing in your self 100%. Not 5%, not 90%, but 100% believing in yourself. That's what Zen is. Can you come up to the challenge? Will you still say, 'No I will leave that to the great master I read about in the books', or 'It hasn't got any relevance to my life at the moment, it's just what I read, what I believe in the books'.

It's always the problem in religion. People want to worship someone up there. They don't want to come up to where they are. Despite Jesus saying, 'Come and be with me', they say, 'No, sorry we just want to worship'. It's a cop out. It's postponing your own awakening.

So the Third Patriarch is talking here about not postponing our own awakening. He says here, *do not remain in duality, abstain from it with every care.*

The moment you die, which could be in the next five minutes, if you are in duality that's what will continue on — cause and effect. If you are caught in duality when you pass, that's what you are going to wake up to when you wake up. Do you want to wake up to that? You have had hundreds of lifetimes perhaps, maybe in different bodies, animals perhaps. Do you want to wake up to that again?

We have got a human birth in the luckiest country in history with peaceful conditions. Everything is very auspicious here, now, to be able to drop body and mind. We have the opportunity.

Don't worry about what I've said, just let it go the moment I've said it. Just let it go in to the unconscious. Let that operate. Don't *try* to do it. Don't *try* because that would be ego-effort.

Let it operate in you, what has been said here.