

Dojo Daishu Ichinyo

(In activity and stillness at one with the community)

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It is said that Dogen Zenji entered *Daibutsuji* on July 18, 1244. *Daibutsuji* was built by his great supporter Yoshishige Hatano. Before *Daibutsuji*'s name was changed to *Eiheiji* on June 15, 1246, Dogen Zenji wrote *Bendoho* (the model for engaging the way). In the Edo Period, this text was included as one of six pieces in the *Eihei Shingi* (The title of the English translation is *Dogen's Pure Standards for the Zen Community*). It is a standard for how Zen monks should spend their days in the monks' hall.

We find the teaching of *Dojo Daishu Ichinyo* (動静大衆一如- In activity and stillness at one with the community) at the beginning of *Bendoho*.

All buddhas and all ancestors are within the Way and engage it; without the Way they would not engage it. The dharma exists and they appear; without the dharma, they do not appear. Therefore, when the assembly is sitting, sit together with them; as the assembly lies down, lie down also. In activity and stillness at one with the community, throughout deaths and rebirths do not separate from the monastery. Standing out has no benefit; being different from others is not our conduct. This is the buddhas' and ancestors' skin, flesh, bones, and marrow, and also one's own body and mind dropped off. Therefore, engaging the Way is the practice-enlightenment before the empty kalpa, so do not be concerned with your actualization. It is the koan before judgments, so do not wait for great realization.

It is clear that *Eihei Shingi* aims at promoting harmonious community life among those who renounce family life to seek the Way. The section quoted above should be understood in this context. People might have an image of Zen practice as something done alone in total silence. But here we find the opposite of the popular image. Dogen Zenji demands that practitioners do all activities of the day and night together with their fellows. Without standing out and going ahead of others, when the assembly is sitting, one sits together with them, when the assembly is sleeping, one sleeps together with them. According to Dogen Zenji, it is "the buddhas' and ancestors' skin, flesh, bones, and marrow" and the body itself of buddhas and ancestors. Through keeping in tune with others in practice, we can free body and mind from selfish clinging and with this freed body-mind our practice becomes non-discriminative. Moreover, this is the koan non-discriminatively manifested (the buddhas and ancestors' way of living in accordance with the dharma). When this is clear, there is no need to wait for a special moment when the great matter is clarified. For its practitioners, the Buddha dharma is not separate from the everyday life of days and nights. Practice and realization are one and the same. As is mentioned in *Bendowa*, tuned to the universality of enlightenment,

practice continues infinitely. Therefore, practice is maintained for one's whole lifetime, without separating from the monastery.

Harmonious sangha

First of all, let's talk about "harmonious assembly" as an element of *Dojo Daishu Ichinyo*. As Dogen Zenji points out in *Shobogenzo Kie Bupposho* (Taking refuge in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha), "so" (僧) means "harmonious assembly." Many persons practicing together devote themselves to the practice day in and day out, aiming at the same goal, without discord. Playing to the grandstand is the biggest obstacle to maintaining a harmonious sangha. If there is someone who tries to get ahead of others and pays no attention to the situation, this person, however earnest he/she may be, disturbs the harmony of the whole community and will eventually destroy the environment for the practice which is the sangha itself.

Dogen Zenji once taught that way to practice the Way is to part company with the ego. Even if we use our intelligence to study many sutras and commentaries, if we do not free ourselves from ego-attachment, we will fail to accomplish the practice (see the *Choenji* version of *Shobogenzo Zuimonki*, vol. 6). Ego-attachment breaks the harmony of the community. To part company with the ego can be understood as a matter of the difference between the public and the private.

The public and the private

Zen practice is NOT to try to have an effective practice based on one's own criteria and to clarify the great matter ahead of others. It is better if we just practice, totally surrendering our body and mind to the activities of the buddhas and ancestors, without doing something different from other practitioners. As I mentioned before, Dogen Zenji made detachment from the ego a way to study the Way. So, to arouse a mind of clinging based on the ego can be said to be "private" or "private inclinations." The expressions opposed to this are "the public" or "for the sake of the public." Dogen Zenji considers this subject of "the public" and "the private" many times in *Eiheiji Chijishingi* (written June 15, 1246). For example, he writes that the *kannin's* (director's) job is "fulfilled for the sake of the public," explaining

To say "for the sake of the public" means without acting on private inclinations. Acting without private inclinations is contemplating the ancients and yearning for the Way. To yearn for the Way is to follow the Way. First read the *Shingi* and understand as a whole, then act with your determination in accord with the Way.

"Private inclinations" means being self-righteous. Dogen Zenji tells us to let go of self-righteousness and study the Buddha Way as "the public." This means to respect the ancient *shingi* and to yearn for the Way of the buddhas and ancestors. To yearn for the Buddha Way is to follow the Buddha Way. Concretely speaking, it is to read *shingi* and to clarify the whole of the practice. And it is to live a daily life with deep contemplation of the Buddha Way itself. Sometimes the conventional image of "the public" has moralistic goodness such as incorruptibility. But, in the

Buddha Way, “to follow the Way” it is most important to make it “public.”

Practice on the long platform and the denial of solitary dwelling

Monks or nuns practice together, living harmoniously, in accordance with the Way. This is called “practice on the *tan*.” A *tan* is a long, raised platform about six feet long and three feet wide where monks sit zazen, eat and sleep. In the *sodo*, or monks’ hall, the *tans* are arranged side-by-side along the walls, so that the monks sit, eat and sleep directly beside each other. In *Eihei Koroku*, vol. 6, *jodo* no.438, Dogen says

From ancient times, people who study Buddha Dharma either reside alone in grass huts or else practice with others in monasteries. People who reside alone are often haunted by various demons and spirits, whereas those who practice together rarely are disturbed by demons such as Papiyas. Before having clarified the passageways and blockages within the Buddha Way, it is vain and extreme folly to maintain a solitary dwelling. How could this not be a mistake? Now, always practicing the Way by staying day and night on the long platform in the monastery, demons cannot disturb us, and evil spirits cannot haunt us. Truly we are good spiritual friends and excellent companions.

Dogen Zenji says that from ancient times among the people who studied Buddha Dharma, there were those who lived alone in hermitages and who practiced together, dwelling in monasteries. While people living alone were often haunted by demons, people living together were not. Therefore, when we practice diligently day and night on the *tan* in the monastery, being encouraged by neighboring practitioners, we can reduce the danger of retrogression in practice. In Buddhism, fellow practitioners are called “good spiritual friends” or “excellent companions.” The wonderful power of harmonious assembly is called “miraculous power of the great assembly.” Before this *jodo*, there is another teaching (*Eihei Koroku*, vol. 6, *jodo* no. 432) that begins like this

Our ancient master said, “A young forest hermit practiced zazen alone in a forest, and became inattentive and lazy.”

This is the beginning of a story from *Daichidoron (Maha Prajna Paramita Shastra)*, vol. 15, by Nagarjuna. In this story, a god in the forest who was Buddha’s disciple encouraged this solitary hermit who had become lazy. The hermit then aroused the mind of diligent practice, continued to practice without sloth, and attained a great result. But if there had been no forest god to encourage him, his practice would certainly have been broken down by his laziness. Giving up the practice along the path is called “having a demon.” We practice diligently together with excellent companions in order not to be invaded by this demon. So practicing among a harmonious assembly is the royal road to accomplish practice. Trying to stand out in the group may often become rather destructive to the practice.

Keizan Zenji also denied the virtue of solitary dwelling. Writing in Chapter 14 in *Denkoroku*, he

says, “In our own Soto lineage, our founder Eihei Dogen has admonished us against living alone. This was so that people would not go astray onto the wrong path.” It is obvious that he took the teaching from Dogen Zenji. Being influenced by Dogen Zenji’s writings such as *Bendoho*, he compiled the *Keizan Shingi* (Daily observances) for monastic training at the temples he founded, such as *Yokoji*. This is also no other than the practice of “in activity and stillness at one with the community” and “without separating from the monastery throughout deaths and rebirths.”

When Dogen Zenji was residing at *Koshoji* in Kyoto, he was already teaching the importance of harmony in the assembly in writings like *Juundoshiki* (Regulations for the Auxiliary Cloud Hall) at the *Kannonori Kosho Gokoku* Monastery). He also developed the idea of not dwelling in solitude and highly recommended spending day and night living together with many fellow practitioners. Waking up together and going to bed together with the spirit of “in activity and stillness at one with the community” is to be understood as the culmination of harmonious assembly. It is the easiest way to obstruct the tricks of ego and self-clinging and to embody the spirit of following the Way in one’s body-mind. Here we see a unique characteristic of practice in the Sotoshu tradition that has been preserved up to the present day.

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