

Jijuyu Zanmai (Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi)

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In 1231, four years after returning from China and moving to Anyoin temple in Fukakusa, Yamashiro, Dogen Zenji wrote *Bendowa* in response to requests from his followers. Ever since his return to Japan, he had been hoping to spread the true Dharma and to save all beings. *Bendowa* was his full-fledged expression of this desire. It was also his first step in establishing his teaching in Japan.

At the beginning of *Bendowa*, he straightforwardly explains that the Buddha Dharma he had received in correct transmission is nothing other than Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi, *Jijuyu Zanmai*.

All Buddha Tathagatas who individually transmit wondrous dharma, actualizing unsurpassable, complete awakening, have a wondrous art, supreme and unconditioned. Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi is its mark; only buddhas transmit it to buddhas without veering off. Sitting upright in zazen is the authentic gate to freeing yourself in the unconfined realm of this samadhi.

Although this inconceivable dharma is abundant in each person, it is not manifested without practice, and it is not attained without realization.

All buddhas transmit wonderful buddha dharma from master to disciple. They all attain unsurpassable awakening. The greatest method for this awakening is Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi. We should make it our standard. Sitting upright in zazen is the authentic gate through which we freely enter this Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi.

Fukanzazengi (“Universally Recommended Instructions for Zazen”) gives us detailed instructions on how to sit zazen as the authentic gate to Self-receiving-and-using Samadh: “a quiet room is suitable. Eat and drink moderately. Put aside all involvements and suspend all affairs. Do not think “good” or “bad.” Do not judge true or false. Give up the operations of mind, intellect, and consciousness; stop measuring with thoughts, ideas, and views. Have no designs on becoming a Buddha. “

He teaches that by letting go of the mind that tries to attain awakening through an intellectual understanding based on the study of writings such as recorded sayings and scriptures and by practicing zazen to return to the original self, our mind-body naturally drops away and our “original face” manifests. If we are to attain the original face, we must practice zazen immediately.

Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi and awakening are not separate. Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi is the practice of awakening itself. This is explained in the following quote from *Bendowa*.

All ancestors and all buddhas who uphold buddha dharma have made upright sitting the

true path of unfolding awakening, practicing in the midst of Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi. Those who attained awakening in India and China followed this way.

Dogen's teaching of Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi as a standard was properly passed on to Keizan Zenji. This is clear in his "Teaching for Myojo Zenji" in *Sermons by Tokoku Kaizan*. Here he clearly explains that Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi is nothing but practicing zazen.

You should not doubt this. If you do not fully understand it in this lifetime, when will you have a chance to clarify the great matter? If you wish to clarify the great matter, there is nothing better than Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi. Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi is nothing but zazen.

We have now found that Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi is a state of awakening during zazen and thus it is not separate from zazen. Therefore we should understand that Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi is directly connected with the foundation of Soto Zen teachings.

Shobogenzo "Tashintsu" ("The Power to Know Others' Minds") is a very important fascicle in helping us understand why Dogen Zenji emphasizes Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi and what Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi is all about in the first place. This fascicle concerns a story about Nanyo Echu described in the 28th chapter of the *Keitoku Dentoroku*. National Master Nanyo Echu, a disciple of sixth ancestral teacher Eno, was ordered by the Emperor to test Tripitaka Master Daiji from India, who claimed to have attained the ability to see others' minds.

In this story Echu asked Daiji to identify his (Echu's) location three times. Daiji could locate Echu the first two times, but could not answer the third time. Echu yelled at him, saying, "You are possessed by the spirit of a wild fox (a pseudo Zen practitioner)!" Dogen Zenji introduces comments by five Zen masters on why Daiji could not answer the third time. Those five masters are Joshu Jushin (778-897), Gensha Shibi (837-908), Gyosan Ejaku (807-883), Kaie Shutan (1025-1072), and Seccho Myokaku (980-1025). The "*Tashintsu*" fascicle consists of Dogen's criticism of the comments of each of those five great teachers.

Dogen particularly pointed out the importance of not overlooking Gyosan Ejaku's misunderstanding of Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi. Ejaku said that the reason Tripitaka Master Daiji could not find National Master Echu's location the third time was that, "The first two times Echu was concerned with external circumstances. But later Echu entered Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi. That is why Daiji could not see him"

It is not that mind concerned with external circumstances and Self-receiving-and using Samadhi are different. He should not have said that Daiji had not seen Echu because mind concerned with external circumstances and Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi are different. Thus, although Gyosan presented a reason why Daiji had not seen Echu the third time, his statement was not yet a correct statement. If one did not see another in Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi, Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi would not manifest and actualize Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi. If Gyosan assumed that Daiji had known Echu's

location the first two times, he could not be someone who understood Buddha dharma.

Dogen Zenji writes that Gyosan made a double-mistake in distinguishing between mind concerned with external circumstances and Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi and in claiming that one cannot see another in Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi. He criticizes Gyosan especially strongly. If someone cannot see Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi, it becomes impossible for him/her to know if he/she is in Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi. This totally denies the possibility of practice-realization.

What it comes down to is that a state of Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi while practicing zazen in unity of practice and realization is not a special function of mind and it is possible for a practitioner to know whether he/she is in Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi.

This function of mind that manifests when we sit zazen with a correct posture and the attitude of giving up “the operations of mind, intellect, and consciousness and [stopping] measuring with thoughts, ideas and views” is different from ordinary intellect and perception. This is explained in *Bendowa* as follows:

These various mutual influences do not mix into the perceptions of this person sitting, because they take place within stillness without any fabrication and they are realization itself.

Therefore even when many things appear in the mind, they are far away from human activities and are the direct workings of awakening.

Dogen’s intention to expressly teach that the Buddha dharma correctly transmitted to him is the Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi of zazen seems to be connected with the fact that in those days in China, the Rinzai school was flourishing. The phrase-observing Zen (*kanna Zen*) established by Daie was very dominant. Daie’s phrase-observing Zen sought to attain enlightenment through working with koans. It harshly criticized the Soto school’s silent illumination Zen (*mokusho Zen*) as deceiving and misleading self and others and strongly excoriated it as the “evil Zen of Soto.”

Silent illumination Zen teaches that the working of Buddha nature manifests by itself through sitting silently. It is a tradition of orthodox southern Zen that originated with sixth ancestral teacher Daikan Eno. It does not emphasize attaining enlightenment so much. Therefore it is always in danger of falling into the non-Soto idea of spontaneous enlightenment by resting upon the naturalness of pure self. That is the point Daie criticized. It is not difficult to imagine that Dogen Zenji was sharply conscious of the criticism from phrase-observing Zen against silent illumination when he wrote about Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi at the opening of *Bendowa*.

After Dogen Zenji and Keizan Zenji, the zazen of Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi was gradually forgotten in the Soto School and each sub-sect developed its own style of practice using koans. After a long period in Japan stretching from the middle of the Middle Ages to the Edo period, people started freshly re-examining Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi.

Menzan Zuiho (1683-1769) is well known as a great authority of modern Soto Zen studies. One of his many writings is *On Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi* (1738). In this book he compiled many

sayings on zazen from Dogen's "*Bendowa*", "*Zazenshin*" and other fascicles of *Shobogenzo*, *Shobogenzo Zuimonki* and so on. Using those quotations, he straightforwardly demonstrated that zazen in the Soto tradition should be the zazen of Self-receiving-and-using Samadhi in which the state during zazen is itself a state of awakening as it is, instead of being a zazen of shutting off delusion and opening up enlightenment.

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