

Bankei Sermons (pg 77-85)

Looking for enlightenment

"To exert yourselves in religious practice, trying to produce enlightenment by doing religious practices and zazen, is all wrong too. There's no difference between the mind of all the buddhas and the Buddha Mind of each one of you. But by wanting to realize enlightenment, you create a duality between the one who realizes enlightenment and what it is that's being realized. When you cherish even the smallest desire to realize enlightenment, right away you leave behind the realm of the Unborn and go against the Buddha Mind. This Buddha Mind you have from your parents innately is one alone—not two, not three!"

No delusion, no enlightenment

"You people all imagine you'd become buddhas now for the first time. But the Buddha Mind you have from your parents innately is unborn, so it has no beginning and no end. There's not even a hair's breadth of anything you can call delusion. So get it squarely in your minds that there's nothing arising from inside. The main thing is simply not getting involved with the world of externals.¹⁹ That which isn't involved with the world of externals is the Buddha Mind, and since the Buddha Mind is marvelously illuminating, when you abide in this marvelously illuminating Buddha Mind just as it is, there's no delusion, no enlightenment. Whether you're making a fist or running about, it's all the unborn functioning of the Buddha Mind. What's more, if you're the least bit in a rush to become a superior person right away, you'll immediately go counter to the Unborn and leave it far behind. In the innate Buddha Mind, there's neither joy, sorrow nor anger—nothing but the Buddha Mind itself, marvelously illuminating and distinguishing [all things]. "So, when you distinguish the things that confront you in the world of externals—joy, sorrow, anger, or anything under the sun—it's the dynamic function of the marvelously illuminating Buddha Mind, the Buddha Mind you originally possess."

Water and ice "Since the Buddha Mind each of you has innately isn't 'created,' it doesn't contain even a speck of delusion. So anyone who says, 'I'm deluded because I'm an unenlightened being' is a terribly unfilial person slandering his own parents! In the Buddha Mind you have from your parents innately, the buddhas of the past and the people of the present are all one substance, with no difference between them. It's just like the water of the ocean: In the depths of winter, the water freezes and turns to ice, assuming various forms—angular, or round; but when it melts, it's all the one water of the ocean. When you realize the unborn nature of the Buddha Mind, that's the water itself, just as it is, and you can freely dip your hands right in!"²⁰

Stopping thoughts

"Since the Unborn Buddha Mind is marvelously illuminating, it hasn't so much as a hair's breadth of any selfish bias, so it adapts itself freely, and, as it encounters different sorts of circumstances, thoughts sporadically pop up. It's all right so long as you simply don't get involved with them; but if you do get involved with thoughts and go on developing them, you won't be able to stop, and then you'll obscure the marvelously illuminating [function] of the Buddha Mind and create delusions. On the other hand, since from the start the Buddha Mind is marvelously illuminating, readily illuminating and distinguishing all things, when you hate and loathe those deluded thoughts that come up and try to stop them, you get caught up in stopping them and create a duality between the one who is doing the stopping and that which is being stopped. If you try to stop thought with thought, there will never be an end to it. It's just like

trying to wash away blood with blood. Even if you succeed in getting out the original blood, you'll be left with the stain of the blood that came after."

Fire is hot

"This sort of thing, your recognizing and distinguishing instantly and spontaneously whatever you see and hear, is the dynamic function of the Buddha Mind you have from your parents innately, the Buddha Mind, unborn and marvelously illuminating. "As another example of the unborn function of the Buddha Mind: When you're just there with no particular thought at all and someone puts a flame to your fingertips, you give a start, and, without thinking, automatically pull back your hand. This too is proof that the marvelously illuminating Buddha Mind is unborn and perfectly manages [everything]. On the other hand, to think, 'That was a flame just now,' and then realize, 'It's hot!' and get angry with the fellow who burned you is to fall into the realm of secondary experience, deliberating after the fact."

Be stupid!

"I tell my students and those of you coming regularly here to the temple: 'Be stupid!' Because you've got the dynamic function of the marvelously illuminating Buddha Mind, even if you get rid of discriminative understanding, you won't be foolish. So, all of you, from here on, be stupid! Even if you're stupid, when you're hungry, you'll ask for something to eat, when you're thirsty, you'll ask for some tea; when it gets warm, you'll put on thin, light clothes, and when it's cold, you'll put on more clothes. As far as your activities of today are concerned, you're not lacking a thing!²¹ "With people who are clever, there are sure to be a great many shortcomings. To have transcended those clever people whom all the world holds in great esteem is what's meant by 'stupidity.' There's really nothing wrong with being a blockhead! "When people say that someone is a clever fellow, I ask to meet him, and when I do and we have a chance to talk, it looks to me as if people in the world are praising an awful lot of foolishness. The fact is that those clever people acclaimed by the world are, from the start, deluded by their own cleverness. They distort the Buddha Mind and obscure its marvelously illuminating [dynamic function], considering other people as of no account, contradicting whatever they say, slighting and insulting them. Of course, since those they're insulting are also amply endowed with the marvelously illuminating Buddha Mind, they aren't going to let themselves be slighted like that, so they get angry and answer right back, heedlessly pouring forth abuse. The true man's ideal is to show kindness to those who are foolish and help those who are evil. To be recognized as a good man by the people of the world is precisely what makes being born a human being worthwhile. How can it be any good to earn yourself the reputation of a wicked person? "So when you go back to your homes and meet your old acquaintances, you should have them wondering about you all: 'How did Bankei teach them Buddhism, anyway? Why, they've come back even more stupid than before they left!' "What I'm talking about isn't the stupidity of stupidity and understanding. That which transcends stupidity and understanding is what I mean by stupidity!"

When thoughts arise

A novice of fourteen or fifteen asked: "When I practice zazen, thoughts seem to come up. What should I do about this?" The Master replied: "To distinguish and recognize each one of the different thoughts that arise—that's none other than the dynamic function of the Buddha Mind. Because the Buddha Mind is unborn and marvelously illuminating as well, whatever things are retained in your mind rise to the surface. In the Buddha Mind, there aren't any thoughts or 'things'; so when you don't get yourself involved with them, don't worry about trying to get rid of them or stop them, you'll just naturally accord with the Unborn Buddha Mind."

Letting things take care of themselves

The Master instructed a monk who had come from Tamba:²⁹ "To take the attitude that, having come all this way, you want to be sure and realize buddhahood now as quickly as you can is to be deluded by your consuming desire for buddhahood. This may seem like something perfectly fine and admirable, but it is, in fact, deluded. When it comes to me, I never even quote the words of the buddhas and patriarchs in the sutras and records. And if you want to know why, it's because I can manage perfectly dealing with people's own selves, so that's all I talk to them about. "Your wanting to realize buddhahood as quickly as you can is useless to begin with. Since the Buddha Mind you have from your parents is unborn and marvelously illuminating, before even a single thought is produced, all things are recognized and distinguished without resorting to any cleverness. Without attaching to [notions of] 'enlightened or 'deluded,' just remain in the state where all things are recognized and distinguished. Let things take care of themselves, and whatever comes along will be smoothly managed—whether you like it or not! That's the [working of the] Buddha Mind and its marvelously illuminating dynamic function. Like a mirror that's been perfectly polished, without producing a single thought, with no awareness on your part, without even realizing it, each and every thing is smoothly dealt with as it comes from outside. Not understanding this, you people take all the credit and act as if you managed everything yourselves by means of cleverness! That's why you can't help remaining deluded. If you clearly grasp that thought is something you produce yourself when you get involved with things that come along, and keep from switching [the Buddha Mind] for some 'thing/ why, that's the basis of religious practice; and it's also what's meant when we say that the Buddha Mind is unborn, our own intrinsic and marvelously illuminating dynamic function."