

The moon on the river shimmers, the wind in the pines sighs

Kōgetsu terashite, shōfū fuku

江月照松風吹



These words are from Yokka Genkaku Zenji's Song of Enlightenment.

The moon on the river shines, the wind in the pines murmurs
What is there to do on a long pleasant night?

Let's respect all humanity; let's respect each individual; let's awaken to that which is beyond ego! Let's make this joy part of each and every person's life--this is what it is for, without mistake. I am not being moved by some absolute power and living in an unawakened way. There could be nothing sadder than to think we are ruled by some ideological or heavenly cosmic power. We have to respect each other and recognize our differences. It is our very nature to not be stuck on anything, to be at one with the heavens and the earth, this great life energy that can embrace all of existence; we must awaken to this great, all-embracing mind.

Our respect for all people has to come from that root source. But respecting all humans does not mean that we should respect whatever anyone does, or that it is okay to do anything we want. It is very easy to fall into this kind of a conceited trap. Respecting each other's character means that we don't push our own desires for each other on to each other. It doesn't mean to look to each others' ego so that it's okay to do whatever we like--that gives birth to a great mistaken understanding. To clearly see the root of the ego, the root of that which is respected in each person, and realize its essence is what is called religious experience.

To have this kind of experience is life's true goal; that each and every person should realize True Mind directly is Zen. Zen is the flow of Mind, and Mind is the body of Zen. We become one with that god who creates the heavens, and as one we create all things and awaken to that. For doing this we throw away all of our desires and realize this mind of not being moved around by our emotions and needs. If we

conduct ourselves only from our desires and needs, then we can't call ourselves the master of all situations. We have to decide that we won't give our all attention to manners and customs of the world; instead we will be like the chill, severe moon shining with great radiance, that just this one person sitting here is of great importance.

Instead of thinking about yesterday or tomorrow, becoming that one person who fills the heavens and the earth as we sit is zazen. Eventually we go into busy cities, and while we sit we can fill the cities as well, but to do zazen is to have nothing in our minds at all and melt into that space. When that small self disappears completely, we don't know: Is the space me? Am I the space? There is only that bright moon shining in the sky; our body is blown through by the wind in the pines.

Does the moon in the sky shine us, or are we the moon in the sky, shining? We can't tell the difference. This is the mind in which the wind of the pines and I are one and the same, filling the heavens and the earth. When we experience this, then for the first time we know the truth of being human. Our body melts into all space, and our state of mind is like a bottomless lake in which we find endless serenity. The world is boundlessly transparent and extends infinitely in all directions. In this state of mind time is not a concept. It is the eternal now.

"This very place is the land of lotuses and this very body is the body of the Buddha."

Can we know this place by trying to make it happen? No, we are all already like this from the origin, as Ninomiya Sontoku wrote:

no sound, no smell,
the rain, the earth, the heavens,
today once again born,
without end.

Without using brush or ink, this endless life energy paints history--living and dying, being born over and over again, without stopping, without hesitation.

Dogen Zenji called it the original face.

In the spring, the flowers everywhere,
In the summer, the song of the meadowlark,
In the autumn, the radiant moon,
In the winter, the snow and chill.

In spring, the abundant flowers are me and I am the flowers. In summer, the singing voice of the meadowlark is like a mother who is seeking her lost child and the child who is looking for its mother. It's not just a bird's voice; in it we feel this pain and longing, and this is our world as well. Material things and our mind become one and the same. In that autumn world of the far-away moon, there is something we see. It is not greediness for material things but a desire to see that moon as our own Mind: to know that truth. The snow in winter wraps everything in white, and all of our differences and pain become purified and embraced in that winter scenery. We are liberated from our differences. This is Dogen's teaching.

The heavens and earth are me, and so is everyone in society. If we see it like this, then the moon and I are not separate, and neither are the flowers and I, nor the earth and heavens and I, nor society and I.

I am the flowers, the flowers are me,

I am the moon, the moon is me,
I am the heavens, the heavens are me.

It is all my pain and my experience. But this doesn't happen from hearing the explanation of some philosopher. When we open our mind and receive the heavens and the earth, we will know for ourselves how it is. We can then know the state of mind of the Buddha, and we are in one single layer that serene Mind. We know the root source of all existence, and we are one Truth with everything, with the entire universe. The universe changes its form always, but we know its essence and know that it is eternal, and so are we. Death and birth cannot exist there. The universe is our life, and there is no death and birth in that. In this very body that decays, we experience this eternal life, and that is religion.