

Interdependence / Karma / *Four Horses*

Additional Reading

From *The Hidden Lamp* by Zenshin Florence Caplow and Reigetsu Susan Moon:

“Zongchi and Bodhidharma’s Flesh” (China, 5th Century)

MASTER BODHIDHARMA had four senior students: three monks and the nun Zongchi. When the time came for him to return to India, he gathered them together. He said to them, “The time has come. Please express your understanding.”

Daofu said, “The path transcends language and words and yet is not separated from language and words.”

Bodhidharma said, “You have attained my skin.”

The nun Zongchi said, “It is like the joy of seeing Akshobhya Buddha’s paradise just once and not again.”

“You have attained my flesh,” said Bodhidharma.

Daoyu said, “The four elements are originally empty and the five aggregates are nonexistent. I see nothing to be attained.”

“You have attained my bone,” said Bodhidharma.

Finally Huike made a bow to the teacher and stood aside in silence.

Bodhidharma said, “You have attained my marrow.”

Kikan’s comments:

- Compare this story to *Four Horses* from “[Blue Cliff Record Case 18](#)” at 30:32.
- Consider that this presentation is not a “contest” where the disciples are competing, but that they are *working together* to present the whole Dharma in different aspects.
- This story represents transmission of the dharma to Bodhidharma’s dharma heirs. Compare this to “building a seamless monument”.
- For “extra merit,” get the book *The Hidden Lamp* and read Shosan Victoria Austin’s reflection on the case.

From “Karma: Karmic Retribution in Present Life”, the July 10, 1980 Dharma Talk by Dainin Katagiri Roshi, at 17:05:

So for a certain period of time we can depend on [the teaching], and then, also, realization comes from actual practice.

Dogen Zenji says, “After becoming Buddha, enlightenment, nirvana exist.” Well, yes, it is [true]. Nirvana, enlightenment, doesn’t exist if you don’t do anything. No matter how long you discuss about nirvana, happiness, or enlightenment – well, it’s there, but it doesn’t penetrate your life. So regardless of whether you understand or not: live. Live, with your best [effort]. This is actual practice. And very naturally, realization comes up from actual practice.

That realization is not enlightenment. Realization is, for instance, you say, “Ah!” Don’t you think so? “Oh, this is Katagiri. Yes, alright.” At that time, I cannot say anything about Katagiri. [He laughs.] Well, if I say something, I can pick up a part of Katagiri as a whole. At that time there is always something “stinky”. Well, “stinky” is not bad always; sometimes “good” stinky. [Laughter.] Sometimes very stinky.

So that is realization. Realization is not enlightenment, it is just when you become human life, exactly you say, just the sound, “Ah.”

Well, read the poem [by Rilke]; Rilke always uses just the sound. “Rose. Oh!” If you see the beautiful scenery which is really perfect, at that time you cannot say how beautiful it is. You just stand up and right in front of the beautiful scene, and just sigh. This is realization.

This realization is constantly there. If you have actual practice, with wholeheartedness, [it’s] very natural. But you don’t, because you already have a certain karma. Karma means customs and habits you have accumulated from the beginningless past. That’s why it’s very difficult to understand this. But even though you don’t understand, realization is always with you. Through this you can learn what human life is – what the pain is, what the suffering is, what the zazen is – right in the middle of actual practice.

Kikan’s comments:

- In the commentary on Case 18, National Teacher Chung’s Seamless Monument at 30:32, Katagiri Roshi eventually says, “of course, you need a whip,” and proceeds to explain why. This explanation appears to be related to karma. Compare his explanation in that talk to this excerpt. What is the “whip” we are talking about?
- Recall from the introduction to the series on Karma: “... we should be careful to understand what Katagiri Roshi means by karma. Karma is not simply action, or simple cause and effect; nor is it some kind of force that locks us into a certain destiny. According to Katagiri Roshi, karma is great energy that allows us to live, to relate to people and the world, and to move freely into the future.”