

Verses on the Faith Mind

by Seng-T'san, 3rd Zen Patriarch

The Great Way is not difficult for those who have no preferences. When love and hate are both absent everything becomes clear and undisguised. Make the smallest distinction, however, and heaven and earth are set infinitely apart. If you wish to see the truth, then hold no opinions for or against anything. To set up what you like against what you dislike is the disease of the mind. When the deep meaning of things is not understood, the mind's essential peace is disturbed to no avail.

The Way is perfect like vast space where nothing is lacking and nothing is in excess. Indeed, it is due to our choosing to accept or reject that we do not see the true nature of things. Live neither in the entanglements of outer things, nor in inner feelings of emptiness. Be serene in the oneness of things and such erroneous views will disappear by themselves. When you try to stop activity to achieve passivity your very effort fills you with activity. As long as you remain in one extreme or the other you will never know Oneness.

Those who do not live in the single Way fail in both activity and passivity, assertion and denial. To deny the reality of things is to miss their reality. To assert the emptiness of things is to miss their reality. The more you talk and think about it, the further astray you wander from the truth. Stop talking and thinking, and there is nothing you will not be able to know. To return to the root is to find the meaning, but to pursue appearances is to miss the source. At the moment of inner enlightenment there is a going beyond appearance and emptiness. The changes that appear to occur in the empty world we call real only because of our ignorance.

Do not search for the truth; only cease to cherish opinions. Do not remain in the dualistic state; avoid such pursuits carefully. If there is even a trace of this and that, of right and wrong, the mind-essence will be lost in confusion. Although all dualities come from the One, do not be attached even to this One. When the mind exists undisturbed in the Way, nothing in the world can offend, and when a thing can no longer offend, it ceases to exist in the old way.

When no discriminating thoughts arise, the old mind ceases to exist. When thought objects vanish, the thinking-subject vanishes, as when the mind vanishes, objects vanish.

Things are objects because of the subject (mind). The mind (subject) is such because of things (object). Understand the relativity of these two and the basic reality: the unity of emptiness.

In this Emptiness the two are indistinguishable and each contains in itself the whole world. If you do not discriminate between coarse and fine, you will not be tempted to prejudice and opinion.

To live in the Great Way is neither easy nor difficult. But those with limited views are fearful and irresolute: the faster they hurry, the slower they go, and clinging (attachment) cannot be limited. Even to be attached to the idea of enlightenment is to go astray. Just let things be in their own way and there will be neither coming nor going.

Obey the nature of things (your own nature), and you will walk freely and undisturbed. When thought is in bondage the truth is hidden, for everything is murky and unclear, and the burdensome practice of judging brings annoyance and weariness. What benefit can be derived from distinctions and separations?

If you wish to move in the One Way do not dislike even the world of senses and ideas. Indeed, to accept them fully is identical with true enlightenment. The wise man strives to no goals but the foolish man fetters himself. There is one Dharma, not many. Distinctions arise from the clinging needs of the ignorant. To seek Mind with the (discriminating) mind is the greatest of all mistakes.

Rest and unrest derive from illusion; with enlightenment there is no liking and disliking. All dualities come from ignorant inference. They are like dreams or flowers in air—it is foolish to try to grasp them. Gain and loss, right and wrong, such thoughts must finally be abolished at once.

If the eye never sleeps, all dreams will naturally cease. If the mind makes no discriminations, the ten thousand things are as they are, of single essence. To understand the mystery of this One-essence is to be released from all entanglements. When all things are seen equally the timeless Self-essence is reached.

No comparisons or analogies are possible in this causeless, relationless state. Consider movement stationary and the stationary in motion, both movement and rest disappear. When such dualities cease to exist Oneness itself cannot exist. To this ultimate finality no law or description applies.

For the unified mind in accord with the Way, all self-centered striving ceases. Doubts and indecision vanish and life in true faith is possible. With a single stroke we are freed from bondage; nothing clings to us and we hold to nothing. All is empty, clear, self-illuminating, with no exertion of the mind's power. Here thought, feeling, knowledge, and imagination are of no value.

In this world of Suchness there is neither self nor other-than-self. To come directly into harmony with this reality just simply say when doubts arise, "not two." In this "not two" nothing is separate, nothing is excluded. No matter when or where, enlightenment means entering this truth. And this truth is beyond extension or diminution in time and space; in it a single thought is ten thousand years.

Emptiness here, Emptiness there, but the infinite universe stands always before your eyes. Infinitely large and infinitely small: no difference, for definitions have vanished and no boundaries are seen. So too with being and non-being. Don't waste time in doubts and arguments that have nothing to do with this.

One thing, all things, move among and intermingle, without distinction. To live in this realization is to be without anxiety about non-perfection. To live in this faith is the road to non-duality, because the non-dual is one with the trusting mind.

Words! The Way is beyond language, for in it there is no yesterday, no tomorrow, no today.

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