

September 2016

Greetings!

For me, the summer seemed to fly by, as there was a lot happening. I must say that I enjoy being busy. I took some trips, had a very nice get together with the family group, and had a very enjoyable picnic/potluck at the Priory. The groups in the Seattle area are also doing very well.

A while back I was invited to hear an excellent talk by a senior Tibetan monk on the "Bodhisattva Way of Life." It brought to mind another teaching from Great Master Dogen in the 13th century, "Awakening to the Mind of the Bodhisattva." This teaching is also referred to as "The Four Wisdoms", "The Bodhisattva Aspirations", and "The Four Signs of Enlightenment." The following discussion will include the insightful commentary on this teaching by Reverend Master Jiyu Kennett and that which comes up from my own training.

A Bodhisattva can be defined as "one who undertakes the training to become a fully enlightened Buddha out of compassion for, and the benefit of, all beings, and does not train for their own liberation from suffering." In the definition of Bodhisattva, one doesn't train for one's own edification, but for the good of all by allowing the magnificent and pure flow of the Eternal to permeate through us, without blocks and obstructions. We have spoken previously of the blocks to liberating ourselves from suffering, such as greed, hate, and delusion. The training helps us to liberate ourselves from being controlled by our thoughts and emotions. Also with our mindfulness and meditation we can see how our likes and dislikes can easily control us by pushing our buttons and riling up our emotions, thus leading us off the path. From previous discussions, we are familiar with how the egocentric self attempts to control us, ultimately leading to our suffering.

Master Dogen has broken down the "Awakening of the Mind of the Bodhisattva" into: Charity, Tenderness, Benevolence, and Sympathy. With each I will give a dictionary definition, and then expand on it.

Charity is defined as "giving of help, a kindly attitude towards people." It is not only the giving of material things, but rather the way of life that comes from a pure and open heart. We want to give with no expectations of reward or gratitude, but for the sake of giving, having a non-discriminatory and non-judgmental mind, knowing that all is of the Eternal.

Tenderness is defined as "being kind or gentle." It is the importance of being open hearted and kind. We want to see everything, all beings as part of the true nature and flow of the Eternal, and be aware of the obstructions that can block the way.

Benevolence is defined as "the desire to do good to all; goodwill." It expresses the selflessness of devoting one's life to the benefit of all, without regard to self-

aggrandizement. We want to come from a place of gratitude, remembering that everything around us helps us to find the Eternal.

Sympathy is defined as "affinity or harmony, usually of feelings, with the emotions of all living beings." It is an understanding of, and compassion for, the feelings of all. Empathy is also a big part of this, the ability to put oneself in the position of all living beings. Here again is the focus on all beings and acting for their benefit, trying to make all a success in their own way.

These "Four Wisdoms" go together and often meld together. It seems that as we go from one of the definitions to the other, we see a seamless expression of kindness, giving, understanding, and selflessness that helps explain the way of the Bodhisattva.

Let me now speak to the point of enlightenment and training. I found a great definition of enlightenment by one of the masters: "a person breaks through the shell of their individuality and attains a sense of oneness with that which is beyond the self"(the Eternal). A common belief is that the only path to attain this oneness with the Eternal is an instantaneous "realization." However, when we consider training in the Bodhisattva way as described above, we are reminded that when we begin we are already in the "stream of enlightenment." To quote Master Dogen, "To practice the Way [training] is, in itself, enlightenment."

With all my heart,

Reverend Basil