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[53]

EJO

Ejo studied with Zen master Dogen. One day in the course of inquiries he heard the saying, "One hair goes through myriad holes," and all of a sudden realized enlightenment. That evening he went to Dogen and said, "I do not ask about the one hair—what about the myriad holes?" Dogen smiled and said, "Gone through." Ejo bowed.

Ejo was from a noble family. He became a monk at the age of eighteen, under the tutelage of a high priest. He studied elementary Buddhist philosophy, then learned the methods of stopping and seeing according to the Tendai school of Buddhism. In the course of his study he realized that it is worthless to learn Buddhism for the sake of honor and gain. Within himself he conceived the determination for enlightenment, although for the time being he followed his teacher's will and worked at formal studies for the sake of progress.

Once when he went to his mother's place, she said to him, "My intention in having you leave home was not that you would have a high rank and mix with the nobles, but that you would refrain from studying for the sake of fame and profit and become a black-robed outcaste with your rain hat behind your back, just going along on your travels."

Ejo agreed. He changed his vestments and never went back to Mount Hiei, the Tendai center. He then studied the teachings of the Pure Land school. Later he went to Kakuen, a Zen master preaching the doctrine of seeing essence, and studied more energetically and thoroughly than all the others there.

Once there was a discussion of the Heroic March Scripture. Coming to the point where it says in the metaphor of the pot that the emptiness inside the pot cannot be increased by adding emptiness or decreased by taking emptiness away, Ejo had a profound realization. Kakuen said, "How could it be that the roots of evil and the barriers of confusion that have been there since beginningless time have all

melted away and you have become completely liberated from all pain and misery!" At that time there were more than thirty students in the group; they all thought Ejo most remarkable, and all paid respect to him.

In 1227, when Zen master Dogen had just come back from China, he was staying in Kennin monastery refining his practice. At that time it was said that he had brought the true teaching from China and inwardly intended to spread it. Hearing of this, Ejo thought to himself, "I already have some realization of the source of the three kinds of stopping and three kinds of seeing taught in the Tendai school, and I have mastered the essential practice of the Pure Land teaching. What is more, I have studied with Kakuen and have a profound realization of the meaning of seeing essence and realizing buddhahood. What could it be that this Dogen has brought?"

To find out, Ejo went and called on Dogen. When they first talked, for two or three days Dogen's understanding was just the same as Ejo's; they talked about the spiritual knowledge of seeing natural reality, and Ejo happily concurred, all the more respectful because of his feeling that his own attainment was genuine. But after several days Dogen revealed some very unusual understanding. Ejo was startled, but as he began to challenge Dogen, he found that Dogen had a truth quite different from and beyond his own.

Thus Ejo's inspiration was renewed, and he sought to study with Dogen. Dogen told him, "I am transmitting the source teaching and want to spread it in Japan. Although I may as well stay here in Kennin for the time being, I want to find another place to live. If I find a place and build a hut, then you should come see me. It is not suitable for you to follow me here in this monastery." So Ejo awaited the proper time, in accord with Dogen's will.

Later Dogen built a hermitage next to a temple on the outskirts of Kyoto and lived there alone. For two years not a single person came, until Ejo showed up in 1234. Dogen gladly allowed Ejo to receive personal guidance, discussing the Way of Zen day and night. After three years, Dogen brought up the saying about one hair passing through myriad holes. That is to say, "One instant is ten thousand years; one hair goes through myriad holes. To pass the test is up to you; to surpass the crowd is up to you." Hearing this, Ejo became enlightened. After receiving Dogen's acknowledgment and approval, Ejo followed

him continuously for a day, like a shadow.

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him continuously for twenty years, never leaving his presence even for a day, like a shadow following a form.

No matter what other job Ejo held, he always served as Dogen's attendant as well. When his tasks were done, he would go back to the attendants' quarters and stay there. Therefore I always used to hear Ejo say, "Although Myozen had numerous disciples, only master Dogen finished his studies there; and while Dogen had many disciples, I walked alone in the abbot's room. Therefore I heard things others did not hear, while there was nothing others heard that I did not."

After he became the successor of the school, Ejo was always highly esteemed by Dogen, who had him take charge of all the Buddhist services at Eihei monastery. When Ejo asked him the reason, Dogen said, "I will not live very long, and you will outlive me; it will certainly be you who will cause the Way to spread. Therefore I esteem you for the sake of the teaching."

Dogen's attitude toward Ejo was almost like that of a student to a teacher. The paths of teacher and apprentice joined, the lights of their minds and eyes merging, like water in water, like space meeting space. With no disagreement at all between them, only Ejo knew the mind of Dogen, which was beyond the knowledge of others.

As for the meaning of "one hair going through myriad holes," Ejo said, "I don't ask about the one hair—what about the myriad holes?" There is not so much as a single atom that can be established; nothing can be produced at all. Therefore an ancient said, "In the sphere of true reality not so much as a single atom can be accommodated. "In the single expanse of pure emptiness, nothing so much as a fine hair is produced. When Ejo had understood in this way, Dogen approved of him by saying, "Gone through." Actually hundreds of thousands of inconceivable meanings and infinite avenues of teaching were all strung on a single hair. Ultimately there is not a mote of dust that comes from outside.

So there are no boundaries in the ten directions, no differences in the past, present, and future. Crystal clear, bright and radiant, this realm is even brighter than a thousand suns shining together—even if a thousand eyes looked it over, they couldn't find its limits. Yet no one doubts that it is clearly comprehended when one is awakened; therefore it is not something extinct. It is not of the character of dis-

tion; it has no movement, no stillness, no hearing, no seeing. Have you reached it in every way, thoroughly realized it in this way?

If you haven't attained this point, even if you practice virtuously for tens of thousands of years and meet innumerable Buddhas, this is all fabricated practice, and you do not understand anything about the Way of Zen. Therefore you cannot avoid the miserable routines of the three realms and will not cut off the flow of birth in its various forms.

If you formally model yourselves on the Buddha and make use of the endowment of the Buddha but have no realization of the Buddha's enlightened mind, you are not only deceiving yourselves at all times, but are also repudiating the Buddhas. Therefore you cannot destroy the ground of ignorance and wander around in the cluster of habitual consciousness. Even if you experience states of felicity by the power of virtue and proudly enjoy this conditional happiness, this is just like the wheel of a cart that sometimes goes through wet places and sometimes goes through dry places—endlessly, beginninglessly, you will just be sentient beings experiencing the results of habitual action.

So even if you have mastered the canonical teachings of Buddhism and can expound their doctrines, this is after all just like a cat watching a rat—even though you outwardly seem to be quiet, your mind is still restlessly seeking. And even if your cultivation of practice is closely refined, your mind ground is never really tranquil, and so your doubts and hesitations are not yet cleared up. This is like a fox that runs fast yet makes slow progress because it keeps looking back. This is a life of playing with the spirit, the life of a foxy devil whose changing apparition has not ceased.

Therefore you should not be fond of academic learning. All you should do is arouse your will for the moment, even for an instant, so that it is like a great fire in which nothing can remain, like open space to which nothing can be affixed. Then even if you think, you will definitely reach the point where thought cannot reach; and even if you don't think, you will definitely reach the point that cannot be emptied. If you have such a true determination, once this will is solidified you will penetrate through to a realization no different from that of the Buddhas of all times.

Dogen said, "When people seek the Way, they should do so with the same determination as worldly people have when they seek to meet a beauty, to overcome a powerful adversary, or to conquer a

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fortified citadel. Once they have such a profound determination, they will surely overcome this adversary, meet this beauty, or conquer this citadel. Now if you apply this mind to the Way, everyone should attain enlightenment." The Way is the formless teaching of universalist Buddhism. You should not think that it necessarily makes a distinction among potentialities, or that beginners cannot reach it. Here there is no sharpness or dullness at all; there is nothing whatsoever to work at. Burst forth once, and you should have profound realization.

Now tell me, what is this principle? I have already told you: space has never admitted so much as a needle, in the vastness there is nothing to rely on—who is there to discuss it? When you arrive at this realm, you do not establish even the name of a single hair, much less the myriad holes. Nevertheless, there is something that myriad things cannot hide, and even when everything is done away with, there is still something you cannot get rid of. It stands out clearly of itself; empty and open, it is fundamentally radiantly aware. Therefore it is called "clean and naked, bare and free." It is also called being clearly awake, everything obvious; and it is called radiant brightness. There is not a trace of doubt or thought, nor any floating dust at all. It is brighter even than a billion suns and moons.

But you cannot call it white, you cannot call it red. It is like waking up from a dream—it is only alive and active. We call this living: to be awake means having awakened and being alert; being clear means being bright and lucid. You should not say that there is no inside or outside, you should not say that it extends through the past or reaches the present. So do not say that one hair goes through myriad holes—what going through could there be? If you call it a hair, this is what Ejo already realized; then what is the substance of the hair?

Space has never admitted even a needle;
In the vastness there is nothing to rely on,
So who is there to discuss it?
Do not say one hair goes through myriad holes—
The bare, clean ground hasn't a trace.