

Questions for Reflection
Talk 8, Series 10

This week reflect on Myozen's dilemma and write your pros and cons regarding his question:

"Should I go to China despite my master's request?"

How your answer will help clarify your understanding of the Dharma.

To review: Here are the *personal and relational* points made by Myozen:

1) "Since I left my parents' home in my childhood, I have been brought up under this master's protection and educated by him until reaching my present maturity. In worldly terms, I have a most heavy debt of gratitude.

2) Also, I have studied the Dharma gates that are beyond the worldly realm, such as the verbal teachings of Mahayana and Hinayana, and the provisional as well as the genuine teachings. I have come to understand the principle of causes and results and learned right from wrong. I have surpassed my fellow students and gained honor. Now I understand the truth of the Buddhadharma and aspire to go to China to seek the Dharma. This has all been enabled solely by my master's kind nurturing.

3) However, this year he has become seriously ill due to old age and he is lying on his deathbed. We do not know how much longer he can live. If I leave now I cannot expect to meet him again. Therefore, he strongly urges me to postpone my plan. It is difficult to disobey my master's request.

Here are the *Dharma points* that Myozen made:

1) On the other hand, if I carry out my aspiration to go to China to seek the Dharma and gain a bit of realization, even though it goes against one person's defiled feelings ("defiled" because they come from attachment), it will become a cause for attaining the Way for many people.

2) If this merit is greater, it will help to repay the debt of gratitude to my master. (Because, after all, the master's role is to teach such that the disciple surpasses him and goes on to be an even greater teacher.)

3) Even if I die while crossing the ocean and fail to accomplish my original intention, because I will have died with the aspiration of seeking the Dharma, my vow will not cease in a future life.

4) We should remember the Tripitaka Master Xuanzang's traces. Vainly spending time, which is easily lost, for the sake of one person would not be in accordance with the Buddha's will.

Here are the points made by his disciples when he asked for their opinions:

1) "Give up journeying to China this year. His aging and sickness are already critical and he will surely die.

2) Giving up your plan this year and going to China next year would be the most appropriate course of action. You would neither go against your master's request nor disregard your great debt of gratitude to him.

3) There is nothing wrong with postponing your trip to China for one or half a year. It would not go against the true intention of the master-disciple relationship and still you would be able to realize your true intention to go to China."

4) Dogen said: "If you think that your realization of the Buddhadharma is what it should be, you should put off your trip to China." (When you think it, this is a kind of loaded statement in that Myozen, still not enlightened, could not possibly think that his realization of the Buddhadharma is what it should be.)

What do you think?