

ARTICLE

The Five Diamond Points

Rev. Master Kōten Benson

This is a transcript of a Dharma Talk offered by Rev. Master Kōten to the Priory community recently. It has been lightly edited for reading purposes. Transcribed by Rev. Aurelian.

Homage to the Buddha.

Homage to the Dharma.

Homage to the Sangha,

This is called “The five diamond points that penetrate to the very essence of the matter.”

The first one is the keeping of the pure and bright mind. This is sometimes called the first mind in the initial stages of training. But it is not, in all aspects, the same as at the beginning. Reverend Master Haryo, the present head of the Order, very much exemplifies this. When, at an Advisory Council meeting, if things get overclouded and confused by people being overwhelmed by the opinions and views which they are continually subjected to by the external world, it is as if he takes out a vajra that is kept polished and golden and bright, and reminds us what the essential matter is.

In the beginning, we look with great sincerity even though we do not always recognise it, and we go at the problem— the koan, as it were — with great determination and a certain amount of naivety, a certain amount of putting everything else aside in order to concentrate on the training and on finding the Truth.

It is easy, as one goes on throughout the years, to become discouraged or to become overwhelmed by the ideas and views and opinions of the world, which can cause one to feel tired, and to feel that the way is obscured. Dogen says “It is very difficult to keep the initial humility to the very end. But,” he says, “it is absolutely essential to do so.” The merit of first mind is the most widest and completely fathomless. Even if Buddhas explain it fully, such explanation can never be enough.

The second diamond point is: when despair and discouragement accumulate, as it were, in our kidneys, the seat of the will; when they accumulate, when the ideas and opinions and views get in the way and we feel stodgy and unable to move, when we feel as if the water of the spirit is bunged-up inside of us, then it is necessary to grasp hold of the will and turn. It is necessary to raise the water of the spirit from the base of the spine up, as if one were grasping something and deliberately turning it. This is done through the positive use of the will; through deliberately — even when one does not feel like it, especially when one does not feel like it — turning the wheel, turning the will, turning the effort; going past the place of obscurity and turning, grasping the will and turning the wheel.

The third diamond point is faith. Faith is not the belief in particular things. It is, rather, active willingness and the activity of continuing on. Faith flows. It is not about accepting particular ideas, views, or doctrines. It is about trusting the teaching of the Buddha and applying it to one's actual daily life, applying it to what is actually in front of oneself. By so practicing faith one is, as it were, holding up a light to be seen by others. This is very much the essence of the monastic life: to hold up the light through one's own training, which is the only way it can be held up; and thus, to benefit the world. This is the primary aspect of teaching, and if it is not present, then teaching through words will not be of any use. Truly practicing faith means to dig down deep inside of ourselves and really apply ourselves.

The fourth diamond point is the flexibility, resonance, flowing of meditation. Do not think that meditation is some state of mind. If you do so, you will be constantly pulling and pushing your mind in order to make it conform to some sort of deluded ideal. Meditation is the flow of the real, true, profound Buddha Nature. It exists. We can know it, and, thus know our real life, the life beyond the karma. The real life. To sit still, to sit down, to let be, to stop conjuring the mind, to stop conjuring the smoke of the ideas and opinions and views, and having to have it this way and not liking it that way. The disease of the mind, the feverish mind. The blessedness of meditation, the wondrous opportunity (which many people do not have) to be able to take some time and just sit and just be: the power of this — when we meditate, we drink the water of the spirit; we absorb it into ourselves, we pour it over ourselves. There is nothing more wondrous than this.

The fifth diamond point is the knowledge of the Unborn, the knowledge, the experience of the Unborn living within oneself, the true life living within oneself, the true flame, the true light. This is not a theory. We are not doing an experiment. The Ancestors have continually practiced, exemplified, taught, explained, pointed to, shown this. It is not beyond our capabilities. The

pillar exists within us. We just need to sit within it, abandoning all the unnecessary, abandoning all the wastes of time. If you can do this, you can live in this in the middle of joy and sorrow, in the middle of aches and pains, in the middle of bantering and silence. May you come to understand this. I pray that you may come to understand this.

Homage to all the Buddhas in all worlds.

Homage to all the Bodhisattvas in all worlds.

Homage to the Scripture of Great Wisdom.