

VI. Tea and Zen

What is Zen?

It is a method of practice. As is widely known, in Buddhist circles, it is also called chwa-seon 坐禪 or su-seon 修禪. Even a Buddhist order was created for the purpose of this practice, called Seonjong 禪宗, and its founders are called Master Daesa 大師.

'Zen' is an Indian word represented by the Chinese characters Seonna 禪那. In ancient times, in India, the people enjoyed practices called Seonna, Yoga, Samadhi, 三昧 Sammae, etc., and although the methods were different, the content had the same meaning. The methods are: Walking 行行 • Thinking 주(住) • Sitting 좌(坐) • Lying 와(臥) • Talking 어(語) • Silence 묵(默) • Moving 동(動) • Quiet 정(靜).

So what do you gain from this?

Through this action, one can contemplate all things and everything that happens in one's inner mind in a calm, undisturbed manner.

This contemplative view, cultivating a microcosm in one's mind, is precisely the wisdom and orientalness of the East.

Therefore, through this Zen way or Tea way, we can reach a state where the universe and life can exist without the self, and where there is neither a self nor the universe, and ultimately a state where there is no other life, that is, the self and all life in the universe breathe together and gain the strength to move together.

Finally, sometimes you gather your thoughts into one thought, and sometimes you do not even have that one thought gathered together. During this time, the mind becomes clear. It is like a state where stagnant water finally becomes a clear shallow stream due to flowing water.

For this reason, people who have learned tea and Zen are seen as naturally holy in the eyes of others because their minds are clear and quiet. Why is that so?

It is because the human being is able to shake off this dusty land of desire because he has understood all things. Wouldn't it be desirable to quietly observe things and thus be rational in all our daily behavior, and to be quiet, calm, gentle, and wise in our actions? 'Tea and Zen' are the shortcut to such a state. The way to make our body and mind light, pleasant, comfortable, and soft is through 'tea and Zen.'

However, the Tea Saint (茶聖) Cho-ui (草衣) prefers to refer to this path of Zen as "right vision" rather than calling it "Zen". The word Jigwan 止觀 (vipassana) is a combination of the meanings of 止 and 觀. To put it simply, 止 is when our mind and body reach a certain state, and 觀 refers to the moment-by-moment phenomenon around our lives. It can be said to be a life of enlightenment, in which phenomena that occur, whether objective or subjective, must be treated with correct perception. Therefore, correctness is ultimately a process of enlightenment, and when this level of correctness is mastered, one lives under correct judgment regardless of time, place, and time. Therefore, it is also called enlightenment in the sense of enlightened view and enlightened action.

Master Wonhyo clearly stated this in his Vajrasamadhi Treatise Geumgang Sammaeron 金剛三昧論, and before that, the Great Master of Heavenly Knowledge Cheontae Jija Daesa 天台智者 大師 (Zhiyi) in China also revealed this, and Seon Master Bo Bo 普照 禪師 also said that it is complete enlightenment.

In any case, this is what tea life is all about in our daily lives, at any stage of our lives when we make fire, boil water, and drink tea. Therefore, tea means living while keeping everything as it is, and we can call it a 'housekeeping life' a term I enjoy using.

In this sense, a Chinese Zen master named Zhaozhou 趙州 always answered the same thing every time his disciples asked him about the great intention of the Buddha's Way or the level of enlightenment he had attained, saying, "have a cup of tea." This is what later generations called Zen Dialogue, a Koan 公案, a Hua Tou 話頭 that is difficult to understand. However, it is not that Zen master Zhaozhou presented a complicated problem to his disciples, but that our enlightened life (覺醒生活) means pointing out that the peaceful mind of daily life is the Tao.

In other words, living with tea consists in taking care of the things around our lives, and from the perspective of Zen, it cannot be anything other than the path of Zen. In this sense, Zen master Cho Ui came to say, "無時禪 無處禪 Zen without time, Zen without place," and Master Wondang 阮堂 (Kim Jeong-hui) also said, 靜坐處 茶半香初 妙用時 水流花開 "an exquisite scent begins from tea enjoyed quietly, and drifting flowers bloom from mysteriously used timely water" ..

On the other hand, tea is a part of our daily lives, including the instinctive diet of people who been eating and drinking water since birth, living in a house where we have to wear clothes according to the season, and living a life where we build a house to live in and decorate and maintain a garden around the house. When we see that it was largely inspired by the reality that we cannot do anything without household chores, we discover the wide and spacious plaza of the Way of Tea.

In response to this, Zen itself speaks of reality, but while it speaks of everything in a broad way, it can also be too general or abstract in some cases, so Zen practitioners who focus on this area falling into a state of fantasy and finding it difficult to get out of it use 口頭禪 'Talking Zen' or 野狐禪 'False Zen'.

In this sense, we can say that Zen stood on the side of the Zen master Cho Ju and the Tea Seong and opened up its true power and vivid conversation. In other words, it can be said that the path to this tea is the path of Zen.