

Of all the writings attributed to Master Bodhidharma, who is said to have brought the Zen teachings from India to China, the only one which most historians believe likely to have been taught by Bodhidharma himself, or by someone in his very close circle, is the **Treatise on the Two Entrances and Four Practices** (二入四行論). It is not a long piece, but is ripe with wisdom on both sitting Zazen and our attitudes of practice in life.

I contend that much of our approach to Shikantaza "Just Sitting" is very ancient in Zen history, and is already reflected quite clearly in many of the very early texts and teachings we have from the first generations of Zen (Chan) in China, including this text which was likely written sometime around the year 500 C.E. It offers much good, practical guidance and profound insight to us today.

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## **Treatise on the Two Entrances and Four Practices** (二入四行論)

Many roads lead to the Path, but basically there are only two: principle (理) and practice (行). To enter by principle means to realize the essence through instruction and to believe that all sentient beings, both ordinary and enlightened, share the same true nature, which isn't apparent because it's shrouded by sensation and delusion. Those who turn from delusion back to reality, who dwell absorbed in wall gazing (凝住壁觀), the absence of self and other, the oneness of the ordinary person and sage, and who remain unmoved even by scriptures are in complete and unspoken agreement with principle. Without being moved, without effort (without discrimination, serene and inactive, (無為 wú wéi), they enter, we say, by principle.

To enter by practice refers to four all-inclusive practices: Suffering injustice, adapting to conditions, seeking nothing, and practicing the Dharma.

First, suffering injustice. When those who search for the Path encounter adversity, they should think to themselves, "In countless ages gone by, I've turned from the essential to the trivial and wandered through all manner of existence, often angry without cause and guilty of numberless transgressions. Now, though I do no wrong, I'm punished by my past (my past crimes and karma). Neither gods nor men can foresee when an evil deed will bear its fruit. I accept it with an open heart and without complaint of injustice. The sutras say "when you meet with adversity don't be upset because it makes sense." With such understanding you're in harmony with principle. And by suffering injustice you enter the Path.

Second, acceptance and adapting to conditions. As sentient beings, we're ruled by conditions, not by ourselves. All the suffering and joy we experience depend on conditions. If we should be blessed by some great reward, such as fame or fortune, it's the fruit of a seed planted by us in the past. When conditions change, it ends. Why delight in its existence? But while success and failure depend on conditions, the mind neither waxes nor wanes. Those who remain unmoved by the wind of joy silently follow the Path.

Third, seeking nothing. People of this world are deluded. They're always longing for something-always, in a word, seeking. But the wise wake up to the essential principle which is contrary to human convention. They pacify their mind in inactivity and accept whatever happens to them, and let their bodies change with the seasons. All phenomena are empty. They contain nothing worth desiring. Calamity forever alternates with Prosperity. To dwell in the three realms is to dwell in a burning house. To have a body is to suffer. Does anyone with a body know peace? Those who understand this detach themselves from all that exists and stop imagining or seeking

anything. The sutras say, "To seek is to suffer. To seek nothing is bliss." When you seek nothing, you're on the Path.

Fourth, practicing in accord with the Dharma. The Dharma is the truth that all natures are pure. By this truth, all appearances are empty. Defilement and attachment, subject and object don't exist, no "this" and "that." The sutras say, "The Dharma includes no being because it's free from the impurity of being, and the Dharma includes no self because it's free from the impurity of self." Those wise enough to believe and understand these truths are bound to practice according to the Dharma. And since that which is real includes nothing worth begrudging, they give their body, life, and property in charity, without regret, without the vanity of giver, gift, or recipient, and without bias or attachment. And to eliminate impurity they teach others, but without becoming attached to form. Thus, through their own practice they're able to help others and glorify the Way of Enlightenment. And as with charity, they also practice the other virtues. But while practicing the six virtues to eliminate delusion, they practice nothing at all. This is what's meant by practicing the Dharma.