



## **Bodhidharma, the Founder of Zen (fl. 440-528)**

To enter the Great Way there are many paths, but essentially they are of two means: by Principle and by Practice.

Entering by Practice means following four practices that encompass all other practices. They are: accepting adversity, adapting to conditions, seeking nothing, and acting in accordance with the Dharma.

What is the practice of accepting adversity? When suffering, a practitioner of the Way should reflect: “For innumerable kalpas, I have pursued the trivial instead of the essential, drifted through all spheres of existence, created much animosity and hatred, maligned and harmed others endlessly. Even though now I have done no wrong, I am reaping the karmic consequences of past transgressions. It is something that neither gods nor men can foresee or impose upon me. Therefore I should accept it willingly, without any resentment or objection.”

Second is the practice of adapting to conditions. Sentient beings are without a self, being steered by karmic conditions. Suffering and joy are experienced together as a result of cause and conditions. Any reward, blessing or honor is a consequence of past causes, and is gone when the necessary conditions are exhausted. So what is there to be joyful about? Knowing that success and failure depend on conditions, the Mind neither gains nor loses, remaining unmoved by the winds of joy. This is to be in harmony with the Way. Therefore it is called the practice of adapting to conditions.

Third, to seek nothing. Ordinary people, in their perpetual ignorance, crave and form attachments to everything, everywhere This is called seeking. The wise are awakened to the Truth, and choose reason over convention; their minds are at peace and wu-wei. All forms change with karma, all existence is empty, hence there is nothing to be desired. Blessing and Darkness always follow each other. This long sojourn in the Triple Realm is like living in a burning house; to have a body is to suffer, how can one attain peace? Those who understand this renounce all mundane existence, cease desires, and stop seeking. The sutra says, “To seek is to suffer, to seek nothing is bliss.” It follows that to seek nothing is to truly follow the Way. This is the practice of seeking nothing.

Fourth, to act in accordance with the Dharma. The principle of intrinsic purity is the Dharma.

*From “The Essence of Mahayana Practice”*

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bodhidharma>

<http://ctzen.org/sunnyvale/>