

Body and Spirit – a Mirage...

Received March 14, 2020
Accepted March 20, 2020

Key words

Body and spirit,
consciousness, alaya,
amala, manas

In his essay, Sandó Kaisen provides a zen-like consideration on three basic concepts of Buddhist epistemology, namely ālaya, āmala and manas, in order to relate them to the practice of Zazen, the sitting of Buddha, its aim as well as preconditions.

Spirit as we know it does not exist. It is because we see the apparition of thoughts that we believe in a source and we name it spirit. However, once we submerge in its nature, we can see well that it does not exist. When there is spirit no more, there is true peace. In reality, intellect, Ego, and spirit are one and the same thing.

In essence, *spirit is consciousness*. Who does the intellect belong to? To the Ego. Is Ego real? No.

When the spirit is dominated by the Ego, it operates as an intellectual faculty, a thought, or seizure. Yet, the cosmic mind is not limited by Ego, so nothing is separated from it, and so it is a *pure consciousness*.

Our true state is pure consciousness. The consciousness contains the ordinary consciousness or the Conscious and the Unconscious. Ego or *manas*. That is a thought, an activity, an impulse. Manas is always in move, but the action that it executes is itself driven by illusions, false calculations, fake mental motivations, bad intentions. That is why manas complicates everything, creates difficulties, complexes.

There is also *ālaya*, which is a reservoir of the unconscious, “a consciousness that conserves everything,” a universal source. When manas is stopped – put to rest – *ālaya* manifests itself and brings along calmness, purity, it connects us to the universal, the base, to the origin: *āmala*, with which it communicates. *Āmala* is a dimension to be found. This is universal and pure consciousness. This consciousness animates all the existing.

How does the communication between the manas and *ālaya* happen? The original seeds that are the same for the whole world (the primordial images) and the individual seeds, which are in large numbers and species, each one creates karma as they are developing. The seeds grow, cross each other, multiply, become *karma* (action), good or bad.

Ālaya is a womb that is fertilized by desires. Without action it is not useful. Manas, as an active force, is useful, but it is not always good, because it is influenced by illusions. So, it is necessary to control it. That is our problem. The only truly beneficial, necessary, is the exchange of spirit to spirit, of heart to heart. *Ālaya* exists before birth; it is purity, confused with *āmala*. More factors intervene in formation of karma,



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Sandó Kaisen is one of the main representatives of Zen Buddhism in Europe. He has been publicly active since 1990 through his books, lectures, as well as TV and radio appearances.

and which are parts of our karma: the potentialities coming from the ancestors as well as the influence of the maternal body. Manas creates the complexities of life. At death, *ālaya* becomes *āmala*, true purity, eternal and universal (*Nirvāṇa*, *Ku*). Manas and the senses disappear.

During sitting, the unconscious rises towards the conscious. Our thoughts and actions become pure. Ultimately, our spirit is Emptiness, *Nirvāṇa*. Our body is only relative, it is not. It only has an existence visible by our consciousness. The same is true of our spirit.

Nothing is stable, nothing is solid, and therefore to attach to a stable spirit and a solid body is an illusion. Life is nothing but a dream dreamt by a non-existing spirit and consolidated by a body created by the same non-existing spirit. If we realise this, we seize the essence of our sitting.