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# Gyoji, the maintained practice

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The dojo closed or half-open, the cancellation of days or retreats: we can say of course that it is a pity.

But whatever happens, whether it is hot or cold, spring or fall, we can always continue to practice where we are.

The important thing is that there is no interruption in the practice, which is called *dokan*: the ring of the way, or the way in a circle. When this ring is represented in calligraphy, it is never closed, so we can always enter it.

Master Dogen talks about this ring of the way that is maintained through practice: practice is *gyo*, and the idea of keeping it continuous is *ji*. So *gyoji* is the maintained practice or the continuous practice, without interruption. Of this ring of the way, Dogen says again that "it depends neither on my efforts, nor on those of others. It is the practice that maintains itself, without defilement. Indeed, the way maintains itself, as it is, without defilement, in the reflection of oneself in oneself. In this sense, it is nature itself".

And Dogen adds, "It is through the *gyoji* of the buddhas and patriarchs that our *gyoji* is realized as a vision, and that our great way reaches its extreme... It is through this *gyoji* that there is the sun, the moon and the stars, the four elements, the five aggregates".

We see here that this *gyoji*, this maintained practice, is far beyond our *zazen*. *Zazen*, the practice, cannot be limited to ourselves. There is no discontinuity between the buddhas, the patriarchs and ourselves: it is exactly the same practice as that of Bodhidharma, for example, who stayed nine years alone, facing the wall, with great determination.

It is by turning one's gaze inward, without looking for anything in particular, that one can open oneself to the reality of Buddha.

So, open dojo or closed dojo, the essential is always there within our reach: *shikantaza*, simply sitting wherever we are and whatever is happening in the world.