

About the Five Elements

Hello my name is Yugen Saito

Today, I would like to talk about the five elements. The five elements are earth, water, fire, wind, and air. Since ancient times, Buddhism has believed that the macrocosm is made up of these five elements. Earth" refers to the soil.

Water is water. Fire" refers to heat, which is generated by the heat of the sun, the fire in our kitchens, thermal power plants, and the heat of the sun in our daily lives.

The word "fire" is a broad concept, such as the fire in an incinerator, and should be understood as a fire. Wind" is wind, but it can be said to refer to the flow of air. of the earth on which we live.

In the troposphere within, winds are constantly occurring as the atmosphere moves. Think of "sky" as outer space, the void.

The five-ring pagodas and pagodas that you see at graves and other places are made up of five shapes representing the five great elements.

Five-ringed pagodas and pagodas represent the macrocosm. There are more than 80 five-story pagodas in Japan.

The five roofs, each representing one of the five great gods, are stacked on top of each other. Inside, the Gonyorai or five tathagatas are enshrined.

Leonardo da Vinci said that the original shapes are a square and a circle, and if you cut a square diagonally, you get a triangle. On the other hand, if you cut a circle in half, you get a semicircle. The square, circle, triangle, and semi-circle are stacked from the bottom, and finally, a bead is placed on top to form the shape of a pagoda.

The shape of a pagoda or five-story- pagoda is a representation of the five elements, stacked one on top of the other, representing the macrocosm. It is an object for making offerings to the macrocosm. The harmony of the five elements is a sincere wish for us. For example, when a typhoon occurs, rivers overflow and residential areas are flooded. When earthquakes occur, residential areas are destroyed on a large scale. When fire exerts its power, for example, spontaneous wildfires caused by the heat of the sun or pyroclastic flows from volcanic eruptions have been known to bury entire cities. In space, the distance between

the earth and the moon is growing by 4 centimeters per year. What will happen to this distance as the years go by? As the Earth's gravitational pull and the Moon's gravitational pull become unbalanced, we may experience phenomena that we have never seen before.

In recent years, the SDGS (Sustainable Development goals) have been proposed by the United Nations, and there is growing momentum around the world to protect the global environment through detailed efforts. However, since ancient times, Buddhists have paid close attention to the functions of the five elements and have prayed for harmony among them.

When written in Sanskrit, the five elements of earth, water, fire, wind, and sky have the sound "a" in common, which is why Kobo-Daishi Kukai invented the "Ajikan" method of contemplation. In Sanskrit, the five elements are pronounced as "Kya," "Ka," "La," "Ba," and "A." The common "A" is the "Ajikan" of the five elements and was established as a method (Zen) to become one with the universe, to see your life as you live it now, and to become one with Dainichi Nyorai or Mahavairocana Buddha.

Depending on its purpose, Zen can be considered in a variety of ways, including relaxation, focused thinking, analysis, deduction, and induction.

Zen while working is called samu zen. Zen while on a pilgrimage is called walking Zen, and Zen while sitting is called zazen. Zen, the way of seeing, using human wisdom to feel, guess, and analyze in various ways, can be found everywhere. In Buddhism, there is a phrase, "listen, think, and practice," which means to think carefully about what you hear from others, and if you think it is good, to take it in as your own. This is an essential part of one's personal growth.

I do not believe that there is anything in Zen that is essential, but I hope that you will see it as a means of personal growth and wisdom that is unique to human beings. I hope that this talk will be useful to you as a means of achieving happiness.

The postcard sermon series was given by Rev. Yugen Saito of Hagyu-ji temple . Translation and voice in English by Hirokazu Kosaka.