

BEGINNERS MIND

Shunryu Suzuki, Roshi

BEGINNER'S MIND

Informal Talks
on
Zen Meditation
by
Shunryu Suzuki Roshi

Editors:

Richard Baker,
Marion Derby,
Gertrude Dixon

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INTRODUCTION
The Beginner's Mind

"In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities,
but in the expert's mind there are few."

People say that practicing Zen is difficult,
but there is a misunderstanding as to why. It is not
difficult because it is hard to sit in the cross-legged
posture.

"It is wisdom which is seeking for wisdom."
because it is hard to keep our mind pure and to keep
our practice pure in its original sense. The Zen school
developed a great deal after it was established in
China; but at the same time, it became more and more
impure. This morning I don't want to talk about Chinese
Zen or the history of Zen. I am interested in helping
you keep your practice free from becoming impure.

In Japan we have the phrase 'shoshin', which means
'beginner's mind'. The goal of our practice is always to
keep our beginner's mind. We recited the Prajna Paramita
Sutra only once this morning. I think we recited it very
well. That would happen to you if you recited it twice,
three times, four times, or more. You might easily lose
your original attitude towards it. The same thing will
happen in your other Zen practices. For awhile you will
keep your beginner's mind, but if you continue to practice
one, two, three years, or more, although you may improve
some, you are liable to lose the limitless meaning of the
original mind.

PROLOGUE
The Beginner's Mind

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People say that practicing zen is difficult,
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position, or to attain enlightenment. It is difficult
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original mind.

For zen students the most important thing is not to be dualistic. Our original mind includes everything within itself. Thus it is always rich and sufficient within itself. You should not lose your self-sufficient state of mind. This does not mean a closed mind, but actually an empty mind, a ready mind. If your mind is empty, it is always ready for anything; it is open to everything. In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities. In the expert's mind there are few.

If you discriminate too much, you limit yourself. If you are too demanding or too greedy, your mind is not rich and self-sufficient. If we lose our original self-satisfied mind, we will lose all our precepts. When your mind becomes demanding, when you long for something, you will end up violating our precepts: not to tell lies, not to steal, not to kill, not to be immoral, and so forth. If you keep your original mind, the precepts will keep themselves.

In the beginner's mind there is no thought, "I have attained something". All self-centered thoughts limit our vast mind. When we have no thought of achievement, no thought of self, we are a true beginner. Then we can really learn something. And the beginner's mind is the mind of compassion. When our mind is compassionate, it is boundless. Dogen Zengi, the founder of our school, always emphasized how important it is to resume to our boundless original mind. Then we are always true to ourselves, in sympathy with all beings, and we can practice truly.

So the most difficult thing is always to keep the beginner's mind. There is no need to have a deep understanding of zen. Even though you read much zen literature, you have to read each sentence with a fresh mind. You shouldn't say, "I know what zen is", or "I have attained enlightenment". This is the secret of such practices as the tea ceremony or flower arrangement, or Japanese singing and other arts. Always be a beginner. Be very very careful about this point. If you start to practice zazen, you will begin to appreciate your beginner's mind. It is the secret of zen practice.

PART I

THE PRACTICE OF ZAZEN

" Zazen practice is the direct expression of our true nature. Strictly speaking, for a human being, there is no other practice than this practice; there is no other way of life than this way of life."

Posture

" These forms are not the means of obtaining the right state of mind. To take this posture is itself to have the right state of mind. There is no need to obtain some special state of mind. "

This morning I would like to talk about four brazen posture. When you sit in the full lotus position, your left foot is on your right side, and your right foot is on your left side. When we cross our legs like this, even though we have a right leg and a left leg, they have become one. The position expresses oneness of duality: not two, and not one. This is the most important teaching: not two, and not one. Our body and mind are not two and not one. If you think your body and mind are two, that is wrong; if you think that they are one, that is also wrong. Our body and mind are both two and one. We usually think that if something is not one, it is more than one; if it is not singular, it is plural. But in actual experience, our life is not only plural, but also singular. Each one of us is both dependent and independent.

After some years we will die. If we just think that it is the end of our life, this will be the wrong understanding. But if, on the other hand, we think that we do not die, this is also wrong. We die, and we do not die. This is the right understanding. Some people may say that our mind or soul exists forever, and it is only our physical body which dies. But this is not exactly right, because both mind and body have their end. But it is also true at the same time that they exist eternally. And even though we say mind and body, they are actually two sides of one coin. This

is the right understanding. So when we take this posture it symbolizes this truth. When I have the left foot on the right side of my body, and the right foot on the left side of my body, I don't know which is which. So either may be the left or the right side.

The most important thing in taking the zazen posture is to keep your spine straight. Your ears and your shoulders should be on one line. Drop your shoulders, and push up towards the ceiling with the back of your head. And you should pull your chin in. When your chin is tilted up, you have no strength in your posture; you are probably dreaming. Also to gain strength in your posture, press your diaphragm down towards your 'hara', or lower abdomen. This will help you maintain your physical and mental balance. When you try to keep this posture, at first you may find some difficulty breathing naturally, but when you get accustomed to it you will be able to breathe naturally and deeply.

Your hands should form the 'cosmic mudra'. If you put your left hand on top of the right, middle joints of your middle fingers together, and touch your thumbs lightly together, (as if you held a piece of paper between them), your hands will make a beautiful oval. You should keep this circle mudra with great care, as if you were holding something very precious in your hand. Your hands should be held against your body, with your thumbs at the height of the naval. Hold your arms freely and easily and slightly away from your body, as if you held an egg in each arm pit.

You should not be tilted sideways, backwards, or forewards. Your spine should be perfectly vertical. This is not just form. It expresses the key point of Buddhism.

This posture is the perfect expression of your Buddha nature. If you want true understanding of Buddhism, you should practice ^{IN} this ^{WAY} practice. These forms are not the means of obtaining the right state of mind. To take this posture itself is the purpose of our practice. When you have this posture, you have the right state of mind, so there's no need to try to attain some special state. When you try to attain something, your mind starts to wander about somewhere else. When you do not try to attain anything, you have your own body and mind right here. A zen master will say, "Kill the Buddha !" Kill the Buddha if the Buddha exists somewhere else. Kill the Buddha, because you should resume to your own Buddha nature.

To do something is to express our own nature. We do not exist for the sake of something else. We exist for the sake of ourselves. This is the fundamental teaching expressed in the forms we observe. Just as for sitting, when we stand in the zendo we have some rules. But the purpose of these rules is not to make everyone the same, but to allow each to express his own self most freely. For instance, strictly speaking each one of us has his own way of standing. So our standing posture is based on the proportions of our own bodies. When you stand, your heels should be as far apart as the width of your own fist, your bigtoes in line with the center of your breasts. As in zazen, put some strength in your abdomen. Here also your hands should express yourself. Hold your left hand against your chest with fingers encircling your thumb, and put your right hand over it. Holding your thumb in this way, you feel as if you have some round pillar

here - a big round temple pillar. So you cannot be slumped or tilted to the side.

The most important point is to own your own physical body. If you slump, you will lose your self. Your mind will be wandering about somewhere else; you won't be in your body. This is not the way. We must exist right here ! Right now ! This is the key point. You must have your body and mind. Everything should exist in the right place, in the right way. Then there is no problem. If this microphone exists somewhere else, it won't serve its purpose. When we have our body and mind in order, everything else will exist in the right place, in the right way.

But usually, without being aware of it, we try to change something other than ourselves, we try to order things. But it is impossible to organize things if you yourself are not in order. When you do things in the right way, at the right time, everything else will be organized. When the boss is sleeping, everyone is sleeping. When the boss does something right, everyone will do everything right, and at the right time. That is the secret of Buddhism.

So try always to keep the right posture, not only when you practice zazen, but in all your activities. Take the right posture when you are driving your car, and when you are reading. If you read in a slumped position, you cannot stay awake long. Try. You will discover how important it is to keep the right posture. This is the true teaching. The teaching which is written on paper is not the true teaching.

Written teaching is a kind of food for your brain. Of

course it is necessary to take some food for your brain, but it is more important to be yourself by practicing the right way of life.

That is why Buddha could not accept the religion existing at his time. He studied many religions, but he could not be satisfied with their practices. He could not find the answer in their asceticism or in their philosophies. He was not interested in some metaphysical existence, but in his own body and mind, here and now. And when he found himself, he found that everything that exists has Buddha nature. That was his enlightenment. Enlightenment is not some good feeling, or some particular state of mind. You must believe that the state of mind that exists when you sit in the right posture is, itself, enlightenment. If you cannot be satisfied with the state of mind you have in zazen, it means your mind is still wandering about. Our body and mind should not be wobbling or wandering about. In this posture there is no need to talk about the right state of mind. You already have it. This is the conclusion of Buddhism.

Breathing

" What we call 'I' is just a swinging door which moves when we inhale and when we exhale. "

When we practice zazen our mind always follows our breathing. When we inhale, the air comes into the inner world. When we exhale the air goes out to the outer world. The inner world is limitless, and the outer world is also limitless. We say, 'inner world' or 'outer world', but actually there is just one whole world. In this limitless world, our throat is like a swinging door. The air comes in and goes out, like this (demonstrating a swinging door). If you think, " I breathe," the 'I' is extra. There is no you to say 'I'. What we call 'I' is just a swinging door which moves when we inhale and when we exhale. It just moves; that's all. When your mind is pure and calm enough to follow this movement, there is nothing: no 'I', no world, no mind nor body, just a swinging door.

So when we practice zazen, all that exists is the movement of the breathing, but we are aware of this movement. You should not be absent-minded. But to be aware of the movement does not mean to be aware of your small self, but rather of your universal nature, or Buddha nature. This kind of awareness is very important, because we are usually so one-sided. Our usual understanding of life is dualistic: you and I, this and that, good and bad. But actually these discriminations are themselves the awareness of the universal existence. 'You' means to be aware of the universe in the form of you, and 'I' means to be aware of it in the form of I. You and I are just swinging doors. This kind of understanding is necessary. This should not even be called understanding; it is actually the true

experience of life through zen practice.

So when you practice zazen, there is no idea of time or space. You may say, "We started sitting at a quarter to six in this room". ~~We~~ ^{You} have some idea of time (a quarter to six), and some idea of space (in this room). Actually what ~~we~~ ^{you} are doing, however, is just sitting and being aware of the universal activity. That is all. This moment the swinging door will be like this (demonstrating), and the next moment the swinging door will be like that (demonstrating). One after another each one of us repeats this activity. Here there is no idea of time or space. Time and space are one. You may say, " I must do something this afternoon ", but actually there is no 'this afternoon'. We do things one after the other. That's all. There is no such time as 'this afternoon' or 'one o'clock' or 'two o'clock'. At one o'clock you will eat your lunch. To eat lunch is itself one o'clock. You will be some place, but that place cannot be separated from one o'clock. For someone who actually appreciates our life, they are the same. But when we become tired of our life we may say, " I shouldn't have come to this place. It may have been much better to have gone to some other place for lunch. This place is not so good. " In your mind you create an idea of place separate from an actual time.

Or you may say, " This is bad, so I shouldn't do this. " Actually when you say, " I shouldn't do this, ", you are doing not-doing in that moment. So there is no choice for you. When you separate the idea of time and space, you feel as if you have some choice, but actually you have to do something, or you have not-to-do something. Not-te-do something

is doing something. Good and bad are only in your mind. Bad is something not-to-do for a zen student. So we should not say, " This is good," or " This is bad ". Instead of saying bad, you should say, 'not-te-do' ! If you think, " This is bad ", it will create some confusion for you. So in the realm of pure religion there is no confusion of time and space, or good or bad. All that we should do is just do something. Do something ! Whatever it is, we should do it, even if it is not-doing something. We should live on this moment. So when we sit we concentrate on our breathing, and we become a swinging door, and we do something we should do - we must do. This is zen practice. In this practice there is no confusion. If you establish this kind of life you have no confusion whatsoever.

Tozan, a famous zen master, said, " The blue mountain is the father of the white cloud. The white cloud is the son of the blue mountain. All day long they depend on each other, without being dependent on each other. The white cloud is always the white cloud. The blue mountain is always the blue mountain. " This is a pure, clear interpretation of life. There may be many things like the white cloud and blue mountain: man and woman, teacher and disciple. They depend on each other. But the white cloud should not be bothered by the blue mountain. The blue mountain should not be bothered by the white cloud. They are quite independent, but yet dependent. This is how we live, and how we practice zazen.

When we become truly ourselves, we just become a swinging door, and we are purely independent of, and at the same time, dependent upon everything. Without air, we cannot breathe. Each one of us is in the midst of myriads of worlds. We are in the center of the world, always, moment after moment. So we are quite dependent, and independent. If you experience this kind of experience you have absolute independence; you will not be bothered by anything. So when you practice zazen, your mind should be concentrated on your^r breathing. This kind of activity is the fundamental activity of the universal being. And without this experience, or this practice, it is impossible to attain absolute freedom.

The Secret of Control

Control

" To give your sheep or cow a large spacious meadow is how to control him. "

To live in the realm of Buddha nature means to die as a small being, moment after moment. When we lose our balance we die, but at the same time we also develop ourselves, we grow. If we are in perfect balance we cannot live as a small being. Whatever we see is changing, losing its balance. The reason everything looks beautiful is because it is out of balance, but its background is always in perfect harmony. This is how everything exists in the realm of Buddha nature, losing its balance against a background of perfect balance. So if you see things without realizing the background of Buddha nature, everything appears to be in the form of suffering. But if you understand the background of existence, you realize that suffering itself is how we live, and how we extend our life. So in zen sometimes we emphasize the imbalance or disorder of life.

Nowadays the traditional Japanese painting has become pretty formal and lifeless. That is why we ~~have~~ ^{has developed} modern art. In the ^I old days, the ancient painters used to practice putting dots on paper in artistic disorder. This is rather difficult. Even though you try to do it, usually what you do is arranged in some order. You think you can control it, but you cannot! it is almost impossible to arrange your dots out of order. It is the same with taking care of your everyday life. Even though you try to put people under some control, it is impossible. You cannot do it. The

best way to control people is to encourage them to be mischievous. Then they will be in control in its wider sense. To give your sheep or cow a large, spacious meadow is how to control him. So first let people do what they want, and watch them. This is the best policy. To ignore them is not good; that is the worst policy. The second worst is trying to control them. The best one is to watch them, just to watch them, without trying to control them.

If you want to obtain perfect calmness in your zazen, you shouldn't be bothered by the various images you will find in your mind. Let them come, and let them go. Then they will be under control. But this policy is not so easy. It looks easy, but it requires some special effort. How to make this kind of effort is the secret of practice. Suppose you are sitting under some extraordinary circumstances. If you try to calm down your mind you will be unable to sit, and if you try not to be disturbed your effort will not be the right effort. The only effort that will help you is to count your breathing, or to be concentrated on your inhaling and exhaling. We say concentration, but to concentrate your mind on something is not the true purpose of zen. The true purpose of zen is to see things as they are, to observe things as they are, and to let everything go as it goes. This is to put everything under control in its widest sense. Zen practice is to open up our small mind, so concentrating is just an aid to help you realize the big mind. If you want to discover the true

meaning of zen in your everyday life, you have to understand the meaning of keeping your mind on your breathing and your body in the right posture in zazen. You should follow the rules of practice and your study should become more subtle and careful. Only in this way can you experience the vital freedom of zen.

Dogen Zenji said, " Time goes from present to past. " This is absurd, but in our practice sometimes it is true. Instead of time progressing from past to present, it goes backwards from present to past. Yoshisune was a famous samurai who lived during the Kamakura period. Because of the situation of the country at this time, he was sent to the northern part of Japan where he was killed. Before he left he bid farewell to his wife, and soon after she wrote in a poem, " Just as you unreel the thread from a spool, I want the past to become present. " When she said this, actually she made past time present. In her mind the past became alive and was the present. So as as Dogen said, " Time goes from present to past. " This is not true in our logical mind, but in the actual experience of making past time present, there we have poetry, and there we have human life.

When we experience this kind of truth, it means we have found the true meaning of time. Time constantly goes from past to present, and from present to future. This is true, but it is also true that time goes from future to present, and from present to past. A zen master once said, " To go eastward one mile is to go westward one mile. "

This is vital freedom. We should acquire this kind of perfect freedom.

But perfect freedom is not found without some rules. People, especially young people, think that freedom is to do just what they want, that in zen there is no need for rules. But it is absolutely necessary for us to have some rules. But this does not mean always to be under control. As long as you have rules, you have a chance for freedom. To try to obtain freedom without being aware of the rules means nothing. And it is to acquire this perfect freedom that we practice zazen.

Mind Waves (I)

Wendell
Eulig

" Because we enjoy our life as an unfolding of big mind, we do not care for any excessive joy. So we have imperturbable composure. "

Roski's
collection

When you are practicing zazen don't try to stop your thinking. Let it stop by itself. If something comes into appears in your mind let it come in, and let it go out. It will not stay long. When you try to stop your thinking, it means you are bothered by it. Don't be bothered by anything. It appears as if something comes from outside your mind, but actually it is only the waves of your mind, and if you are not bothered by the waves, gradually they will become calmer and calmer. In five or at most ten minutes, your mind will be completely serene and calm. At that time your breathing will become quite slow, while your pulse will become a little faster. We don't know why this is so, but it has been demonstrated scientifically.

It will take quite a long time before you find your calm, serene mind in your practice, but even though many sensations come, many thoughts or images arise, those are just waves of your own mind. Nothing comes from outside your mind. Usually we think of our mind as receiving impressions and experiences from outside, but that is not the true understanding of our mind. According to our understanding, the mind includes everything; when you think something comes from outside it means only that something appears in your mind. Nothing outside yourself can cause any trouble. You yourself make the waves in your mind. If you leave your mind as it is it will become calm. This mind is called big mind.

If your mind is related to something outside itself, that mind is a small mind, a limited mind. If your mind is not related to anything else, there is no dualistic understanding in the activity of your mind, and you understand that activity as just waves of your mind. Big mind experiences everything within itself. Do you understand the difference between the two minds: the mind which includes everything, and the mind which is related to something? Actually they are the same thing, but the understanding is different, and your attitude towards your life will be different according to which understanding you have.

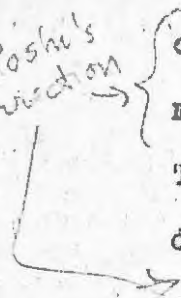
That everything is included within your mind is the essence of mind. To experience this is to have religious feeling. Even though waves arise, the essence of your mind is pure; it is just like clear water with a few waves. Actually water always has waves. Waves are the practice of the water. To speak of waves apart from water or water apart from waves is a delusion. Water and waves are one. Big mind and small mind are one. When you understand your mind in this way, you have some security in your feeling. As your mind does not expect anything from outside, it is always filled. A mind with waves in it is not a disturbed mind, but actually an amplified one. Whatever you experience is an expression of big mind.

The activity of big mind is to amplify itself through various experiences. In one sense our experiences ^{are} ~~are~~ always fresh and new, but in another sense they are nothing but ^{repeated manifestations or rather} a continuous unfolding of the one big mind. For instance

Roshe's copy

if you have something good for breakfast, you will say,
" This is good ". Something 'good' is supplied as some-
thing experienced sometime long before, even though you
may not remember when. With big mind we accept each
of our experiences as if recognizing ^{the} ~~our own~~ ^{we see} face in a
mirror. ^{as our own} For us there is no fear of losing this mind.
There is nowhere to come or to go; there is no fear of
death, no suffering from old age or sickness. Because we
enjoy ^{all aspects of} our life as an unfolding of big mind, we do not
care for any excessive joy. So we have imperturbable
composure, and it is with this imperturbable composure of
big mind that we practice zazen.

Roshi's
correction



Mind Waves (II)

" You should be rather grateful ^{for} to the weeds you have in your mind, because eventually they will enrich your practice. "

When the alarm rings early in the morning, and you get up, I think you don't feel so good. It is not easy to come and sit, and even after you arrive and begin zazen you have to encourage yourself to sit well. These are just waves of your mind, and in pure zazen they should not be any waves in your mind. But while you are sitting these waves will become smaller and smaller, and your effort will change into some subtle feeling.

We say, " Pulling out the weeds we give nourishment to the plant ". We pull the weeds and bury them near the plant to give it nourishment. So even though you have some difficulty in your practice, even though you have some waves while you are sitting, those waves themselves will help you. So you should not be bothered by the weeds in your mind; rather you should be grateful to them, because eventually they will enrich your practice. If you have some experience of how the weeds in your mind change into mental nourishment in your practice, your practice will make remarkable progress. You will feel the progress. You will feel how they change into self-nourishment. Of course it is not so difficult to give some philosophical or psychological interpretation of our practice, but that is not enough. We must have the actual experience of how our weeds change into nourishment.

Strictly speaking, any effort we make is not good for our practice because it creates waves in our mind. It is impossible, however, to attain absolute calmness of our mind without any effort. We must make some effort, but

we must forget ourselves in the effort we make. In this realm there is no subjectivity or objectivity. Our mind is just calm, without even any awareness. And in this unawareness, every effort and every idea and thought will vanish. So it is necessary for us to encourage ourselves and to make an effort up to the last moment when all effort disappears. You should keep your mind on your breathing until you are not aware of your breathing.

And we should try to continue our effort forever, but we should not expect some stage when we will forget all about it. We should just try to keep our mind on our breathing. That is our actual practice. And that effort will be refined more and more while you are sitting. At first the effort we make is quite rough and impure, but by the power of practice the effort will become purer and purer. When your effort becomes pure, your body and mind become pure. This is the way we practice zen. Once you understand our innate power to purify ourselves and our surroundings, you can act properly, and you will learn from each other, and you will become friendly to each other. This is the merit of zen practice. But the way of practice is just to be concentrated on your breathing with the right posture and with great, pure effort. This is how we practice zen.

Marrow of Zen

" In the zazen posture, your mind and body have great power to accept things as they are, whether agreeable or disagreeable. "

In our scriptures (Samyuktagama Sutra, Vol. 33), it is said that there are four kinds of horses: excellent ones, good ones, poor ones, and bad ones. The best horse will run slow and fast, right and left, at the driver's will, before it sees the shadow of the whip; the second best will run as well as the first one does, just before the whip reaches his skin; the third one will run when it feels pain on its body; the fourth will run after the pain penetrates to the marrow of his bones. You can imagine how difficult it is for the fourth one to learn how to run !

When we hear this story almost everyone wants to be the best horse. Even if it is impossible to be the best one, we want to be the second best. This is, I think, the usual understanding of this story, and of zen. You may think that when you sit in zazen you will find out whether you are one of the best horses. or one of the worst ones. Here, however, there is a misunderstanding of zen. If you think the aim of zen practice is to train you to become one of the best horses, you will have a big problem. This is not the right understanding of zen. Actually, if you practice zen in the right way it does not matter whether you are the best horse or the worst one. That is not the point. When you consider the mercy of Buddha, how do you think Buddha will feel about the four kinds of horses ? He will have more sympathy for the worst one than for the best one.

When you are determined to practice zazen with the great mind of Buddha, you will find the worst horse is the most valuable one. In your very imperfections you will find the basis for your firm, way-seeking mind. Those who can sit perfectly physically usually take more time to obtain the true way of zen, the actual feeling of zen, the marrow of zen. But those who find great difficulties in practicing zen will find more meaning in it. So I think that sometimes the best horse may be the worst horse, and the worst horse can be the best one.

If you study calligraphy you will find that those who are not so clever usually become the best calligraphers. Those who are very clever with their hands often encounter great difficulty after they have reached a certain stage. This is also true in art and in zen. It is true in life. So when we talk about zen we cannot say, " He is good ", or " He is bad ", in the ordinary sense of the words. The posture taken in zazen is not the same for each of us. For some it may be impossible to take the cross-legged posture. But even though you cannot take the right posture, when you arouse your real, way-seeking mind, you can practice zen in its true sense. And actually it is easier for those who have difficulties in sitting to arouse the true way-seeking mind than for those who can sit easily.

When we reflect on what we are doing in our everyday life, we are always ashamed of ourselves. One of my students wrote to me saying, " You sent me a calendar, and I am trying to follow the good mottos which appear on each page. But the year has hardly begun, and already I have failed ! "

Dogen Zengi said, " Shyoshaku jushaku ". 'Shaku' generally means mistake or wrong. 'Shyoshaku jushaku' means to succeed wrong with wrong, or one continuous mistake. According to Dogen, one continuous mistake can also be zen. A zen master's life could be said to be so many years of 'shyoshaku jushaku'. This means so many years of one single-minded effort.

We say, " A good father is not a good father ". Do you understand ? One who thinks he is a good father is not a good father; one who thinks he is a good husband is not a good husband. One who thinks he is one of the worst husbands may be a good one if he is always trying to be a good husband, with a single-hearted effort. If you find it impossible to sit because of some pain or some physical difficulty, then you should sit anyway, using a thick cushion or a chair. Even though you are the worst horse you will get the marrow of zen.

Suppose your children are suffering from a hopeless disease. You do not know what to do; you cannot lie in bed. Normally the most comfortable place for you would be a warm comfortable bed, but now because of your mental agony you cannot rest. You may walk up and down, in and out, but this doesn't help. Actually the best way to relieve your mental suffering is to sit in zazen, even in such a confused state of mind and bad posture. If you have no experience of sitting under this kind of difficult situation you are not a zen student. No other activity will appease your suffering. In other restless positions you have no power to accept your difficulties, but in the zazen posture

which you have acquired by long, hard practice your mind and body have great power to accept things as they are, whether they are agreeable or disagreeable.

When you feel disagreeable it is better for you to sit. There is no other way to accept your problem and work on it. Whether you are the best horse or the worst, or whether your posture is good or bad, is out of the question. Everyone can practice zazen, and in this way work on his problems, and learn to accept them.

Suppose you sitting in the middle of your own problem. Which is more real to you: your problem or you, yourself? Your problem may be in your imagination, but the awareness that you are here, right now, is the ultimate fact. This is the point you will realize by zazen practice. In continuous practice, under a succession of agreeable and disagreeable situations, you will realize the marrow of zen and acquire its true power.

No Dualism

⁷¹¹
" To stop your mind does not mean to stop your activities of mind. It means your mind pervades your whole body... With your full mind you form the mudra in your hands. "

We say our practice should be without gaining ideas, without any expectations, even of enlightenment. This does not mean, however, just to sit without any purpose. This practice free from gaining ideas is based on the Prajna Paramita Sutra, but if you aren't careful the sutra itself will give you a gaining ideal. It says, " Form is emptiness and emptiness is form. " But if you attach to that statement, you are liable to be involved in dualistic ideas: here is you, form, and here is emptiness, which you are trying to realize through your form. So 'form is emptiness, and emptiness is form' is still dualistic. But fortunately ^{our teaching} the sutra goes on to say, " Form is form and emptiness is emptiness. " Here there is no dualism. When you find it difficult to stop your mind in your sitting and are still trying to stop your mind, this is the stage of 'form is emptiness and emptiness is form'. But while you are practicing even in this dualistic way, more and more you will have oneness with your goal. And when your practice becomes effortless you can stop your mind. This is the stage of 'form is form and emptiness is emptiness'.

⁷¹²
To stop your mind does not mean to stop your activities of mind. It means your mind pervades your whole body. Your mind follows your breathing. With your full mind you form the mudra in your hands. With your whole mind you sit with painful legs without being disturbed by them. This is to sit without any gaining idea. At first you feel some restrict-

ion in your posture, but when you are not disturbed by the restriction, you have found the meaning of 'emptiness is emptiness and form is form.' So to find your own way under some restriction is the way of practice.

So practice does not mean that whatever you do, even lying down, that is zazen. When your mind is not restricted by restriction, that is what we mean by practice. When you say, "Whatever I do that is Buddha nature, so it doesn't matter what I do, and there is no need to practice zazen," that is already a dualistic understanding of our everyday life. If it really doesn't matter, there is no need for you even to say so. As long as you are concerned about what you do, that is dualistic. If you are not concerned about what you do, you will not say so. When you sit, you will sit. When you eat, you will eat. That's all. If you say, "It doesn't matter," it means that you are making some excuse to do something in your own way with your small mind. It means you are attached to some particular thing or way. That is not what we mean when we say, "Just to sit is enough," or "Whatever you do that is zazen." Of course whatever we do, that is zazen, but if so, there is no need to say so. So when you sit, you will just sit without being disturbed by your painful legs or sleepiness. That is zazen. But at first it is very difficult to accept things as they are. You will be annoyed by the feeling you have in your practice. When you can do everything, whether it is good or bad, without disturbance or without being annoyed by the feeling, that is actually what we mean by 'form is form and emptiness is emptiness!'

Suppose you suffer from an illness like cancer, and you realize you cannot live more than two or three years. Then, seeking something upon which to rely, you will start practice. Someone may rely on the help of God. Someone may start the practice of zazen. His practice will be concentrated on obtaining emptiness of mind, believing the Buddhist teaching that originally we are empty beings. That means he is trying to be free from the suffering of duality. This is the practice of 'form is emptiness or emptiness is form.' Because of the truth of emptiness, he wants to have the actual realization of it in his life. Of course, this practice will help him. If he practices it, believing in its truth, and realizing that to be too concerned about this life is wrong, he is ^{at least} still making effort. That will help him of course, but that is not perfect practice.

Knowing that your life is short, to enjoy it, day after day, moment after moment, that is the life of 'form is form, and emptiness is emptiness'. When Buddha comes, you will welcome him; when the devil comes, you will welcome him. The famous zen master, Ummon, said, "Sun-faced Buddha, and moon-faced Buddha". When he was ill, someone asked him, "How are you?" And he answered, "Sun-faced Buddha and moon-faced Buddha". That is the life of 'form is form, and emptiness is emptiness'. There is no problem. One year of life is good. One hundred years of life are good. If you continue our practice, you will attain this stage.

But at first you will have various problems, and it is necessary for you to make some effort to continue our practice. Practice without effort is not true practice for

the beginner. For the beginner, the practice needs great effort. ^{Insert below} So the understanding that whatever you do, that is zen, so it does not matter whether you practice or not, is completely mistaken. But if you continue, if you make your best effort just to continue your practice, without gaining ideas and with your whole body and mind, then whatever you do, that will be true practice. So just to continue should be your purpose. When you do something, just to do it, should be your purpose. Then form is form and you are you, and true emptiness will be realized in your practice.

INSERT [From Roshin's lecture, Aug. 4, '68, in S.F.]

Especially for young people, it is necessary to try very hard to achieve something. And you must stretch out your arms and legs as wide as they will go. (Demonstrating.) Form is form. You must be true to your own way until at last you actually come to the point where you see it is necessary to forget all about yourself.

¶ Until you come to this point,

Bowing (I)

" You should be prepared to bow, even in your last moment. "

After zazen we bow to the floor nine times. By bowing we are giving up ourselves. To give up ourselves, means to give up our dualistic ideas. So there is no difference between zazen practice and bowing. Usually to bow means to pay our respect to something which is more respectable than ourselves. But in our understanding of bowing, to pay our respect means to give up our dualistic understanding. Actually, when you bow to Buddha you should have no idea of Buddha; you just become one with Buddha; you are already Buddha himself. When you become one with Buddha, or one with everything that exists, you realize the true meaning of being. Forgetting all about your dualistic ideas, everything becomes your teacher, and everything can be an object of worship.

When everything exists within your big mind, the dualistic relationship between everything drops off. There is no distinction between heaven and earth, man and woman, or teacher and disciple. Sometimes a man bows to a woman; sometimes a woman bows to a man. Sometimes the disciple bows to the master; sometimes the master bows to the disciple. A master who cannot bow to his disciple cannot bow to Buddha. Sometimes the master and disciple bow together to Buddha. Sometimes we may even bow to cats and dogs.

In your big mind, everything has the same value. Everything is Buddha himself. You see something or hear a sound and there you have everything just as it is. In

your practice you should accept everything as it is, giving to each thing the same respect given to a Buddha. Here there is Buddhahood. Then Buddha bows to Buddha, and you bow to yourself. This is the true bow.

If you do not have this firm conviction of big mind in your practice, your bow will be dualistic. When you are just yourself, you bow to yourself in its true sense, and you are one with everything. Only when you are you yourself, can you bow to everything in its true sense. So bowing is a very serious practice. You should be prepared to bow even in your last moment; when you cannot do anything except bow, you should do it. This kind of conviction is necessary. Bow with this spirit and all the precepts, all the teachings are yours, and you will possess everything within your big mind.

Sen No Rikyu, the founder of the Japanese tea ceremony, committed hari-kari at the order of his lord Hideyoshi. Just before Rikyu took his own life he said, "When I have this sword there is no Buddha or no patriarchs". He meant that when we have the sword of big mind, there is no dualistic world any more, and the only thing which exists is this spirit. This kind of imperturbable spirit was always present in Rikyu's tea ceremony. He never did anything in just a dualistic way; he was ready to die in each moment. In ceremony after ceremony he died, and he renewed himself. This is the spirit of the tea ceremony. This is how we bow.

Bowing (II)

" Even though it is impossible to get rid of our self-centered desires, we have to do it, if our true nature wants us to. "

My teacher had a callous on his forehead from bowing. He knew he was an obstinate, stubborn fellow and so he bowed and bowed and bowed. The reason he bowed was that inside himself he always heard his master's scolding voice. He had joined the Soto order when he was thirty, which for a Japanese priest is rather late. When we are young we are less stubborn, and it is easier to get rid of our selfishness. So his master always called my teacher 'You-lately-joined-fellow', and scolded him for joining so late. Actually his master loved him for his stubborn character. And when my teacher was seventy, he said, " When I was young I was like a tiger, but now I am like a cat ! " He was very pleased to be like a cat. " Now I am a cat ! " he said.

Bowing helps to eliminate our self-centered ideas. This is not so easy. But even though it is difficult to get rid of these ideas, bowing is a very valuable practice. The result is not the point; it is the effort to improve ourselves that is valuable. There is no end to our practice.

Each bow expresses one of the four Buddhist vows. These vows are: " Although sentient beings are innumerable, we vow to save them. Although our evil desires are limitless, we vow to be rid of them. Although the teaching is limitless, we vow to learn it all. Although

Buddhism is unattainable, we vow to attain it. " If it is unattainable, how can we attain it? But we should ! That is Buddhism.

To think, " Because it is possible we will do it, " is not Buddhism. Even though it is impossible, we have to do it if our true nature wants us to. Actually, whether or not it is possible to get rid of our self-centered ideas is not the point. If it is our inmost desire we have to do it. We have to get rid of them, and when we make this effort, our inmost desire is appeased and nirvana is there. Before you determine to do it, you have difficulty, but once you start to do it you have none. Your effort appeases your inmost desire, and there is no other way to attain calmness. Calmness of mind does not mean you should stop your activity. Real calmness should be found in activity itself. We say, " It is easy to have calmness in inactivity, it is hard to have calmness in activity, but calmness in activity is the true calmness. "

After you have practiced for awhile, you will realize that it is not possible to make rapid, extraordinary progress. Even though you try very hard, the progress you make is always little by little. It is like going through fog. It is not like a shower; if you go out in a shower you will know when you get wet. In a fog, you don't know you are getting wet, but if you keep walking you will get wet little by little. If your mind has ideas of progress, you may say, " Oh, this pace is terrible ! " but actually it is not. When you get wet in a fog it is very difficult to dry yourself. So there is no need to worry about progress.

It is like studying a foreign language; you cannot do it all of a sudden, but by repeating it over and over you will master it. This is the Soto way of practice. We make progress little by little, or we don't even expect to make progress. Just to be sincere and make our full effort in each moment is enough. There is no nirvana outside our practice.

Nothing Special

" If you continue this simple practice every day, you will obtain some wonderful power. Before you attain it, it is something wonderful, but after you attain it, it is not anything special. "

I don't feel like speaking after zazen. I feel the practice of zazen is enough. But if I should say something I think what I shall talk about is how wonderful it is to practice zazen in this way. Our purpose is just to keep this practice forever. This practice started from beginningless time, and it will continue into an endless future. Strictly speaking, for a human being, there is no other practice than this practice. There is no other way of life than this way of life. Zen practice is the direct expression of our true nature,

Of course, whatever we do is the expression of our true nature, but without this practice it is difficult to realize what our human life is. It is our human nature always to be active, just as it is the universal nature of every existence. As long as we are alive, we are always doing something. But as long as you think, " I am doing this, or I have to do this, or I must attain something special ", you are actually not doing anything. When you give up, when you no longer want something, or when you do not try to do anything special, then you do something. When in what you do there is no gaining idea, then you do something. In zazen you can understand that what you are doing is not for the sake of anything. You may feel as if you were doing something special, but actually it is the expression of your true nature; it is

the activity which appeases your inmost desire. So in this sense, just to practice zazen is enough. But as long as you think you are practicing zazen for the sake of something, that is not true practice.

If you continue this simple practice everyday you will obtain some wonderful power. Before you attain it, it is some wonderful power, but after you attain it, it is not anything special. It is just you yourself, nothing special. As a Chinese poem says, "If you go to the province of Rosan, it is nothing special. However, Rosan is famous for its misty mountains, and Sekko is famous for its water." People think it must be wonderful to see the range of mountains covered by mists in Rosan, and the water which covers all the earth in Sekko. But if you go there you will see just water and just mountains. There is nothing special.

But it is a kind of mystery that for the people who have no experience of enlightenment, enlightenment is something wonderful. But if they attain it, it is nothing. Although it is nothing, it is not nothing. Do you understand? For the mother who has children, having children is nothing special. But if she lost her children, how would she feel? That is zazen. So, if you continue this practice, more and more you will acquire something...nothing special, but nevertheless something. You may say universal nature or Buddha nature, or enlightenment. You may call it by many names, but for the person who owns it, it is nothing, and it is something.

When we express our true nature, we are a human being.

When we don't, we don't know what we are. We are not an animal, because we walk on two legs. We are something different from an animal, but what are we? We may be a ghost; we don't know what to call ourselves. Such a creature does not actually exist. It is a delusion. We are not a human being anymore, but we do exist! When zen is not zen, nothing exists. Intellectually my talk makes no sense, but if you have experienced true practice you will understand what I mean. If something exists, it has its own true nature, its Buddha nature. In the Parinirvana Sutra Buddha says, "Everything has Buddha nature," but Dogen reads it in this way, "Everything is Buddha nature". There is a difference. If you say, "Everything has Buddha nature", it means Buddha nature is in each existence, so Buddha nature and each existence are different. But when you say, "Everything is Buddha nature", it means everything is Buddha nature itself. When there is no Buddha nature, there is nothing at all. Something apart from Buddha nature is just a delusion. It may exist in your mind, but such things actually do not exist.

So to be a human being is to be Buddha. Buddha nature is just another name for human nature, our true human nature. Thus even though you do not do anything, you are actually doing something. You are expressing yourself. You are expressing your true nature. Your eyes will express; your voice will express; your demeanor will express. The most important thing is to express our true nature in the simplest, most

adequate way and to appreciate the true nature in the smallest existence.

So I cannot express my joy in practicing zazen with you here, once a week. While you are continuing this practice, week after week, year after year, your experience will become deeper and deeper, and the experience you obtain will cover everything you do in your everyday life. The most important thing is to forget all gaining ideas, all dualistic ideas. In other words, just practice zazen in a certain posture. This is a very good point. Don't think about anything. Just remain on your cushion without thinking, without expecting anything. Then eventually you will resume to your own true nature. That is to say, your own true nature resumes to itself.

PART II

RIGHT ATTITUDE IN PRACTICE

" The point we emphasize is strong confidence in our original nature. "

Single-minded Way

" Even if the sun were to rise from the west,
the Bodhisattva has only one way. "

The purpose of my talk is not to give you some intellectual understanding, but just to express my appreciation of our zen practice. To sit with you in this way is very very unusual. Of course, whatever we do is unusual, because our life itself is so unusual. Buddha said, " To appreciate you^r human life is as rare as soil on your finger nail ". You know the soil on your nail is such a small speck. Our human life is rare and wonderful; when I sit I want to remain in this way forever, but I encourage myself to have another practice, for instance to recite the sutra, or to bow. And when I bow, I think, " This is wonderful ". But I have to change my practice again to recite the sutra. So the purpose of my talk is to express my appreciation, that's all. Our way is not to sit to acquire something; it is to express our true nature. That is our practice.

If you want to express yourself, your true nature, there should be some natural and appropriate way of expression. Even swaying right and left, before or after sitting, is an expression of yourself. It is not preparation for practice, or relaxation after practice; it is part of the practice. So we should not do it as if it were preparing for something else. This should be true in your everyday life. To cook, or to fix some food, is not preparation, according to Dogen; it is practice. To cook is not just to prepare food for someone or for yourself; it is to express

your sincerity. So when you cook you should express yourself in your activity in the kitchen. You should allow yourself plenty of time; you should work on it with nothing in your mind, and without expecting anything. You should just cook! Even cleaning is not preparation for rituals. We clean, and then we observe rituals, and then we clean up again. That is also an expression of our sincerity, a part of our practice. So it is necessary to sit in zazen in this way. But just to sit is not our way. Whatever you do, it should be an expression of the same activity. So we should always appreciate what we are doing. There is no preparation for something else.

The Bodhisattva's way is called 'the single-minded way', or 'one railway track thousands of miles long'. The railway track is always the same. If it were to become wider or narrower, it would be disastrous. Wherever you go the railway track is always the same. That is the Bodhisattva's way. So even if the sun were to rise from the west, the Bodhisattva has only one way. His way is in each moment to express his nature and his sincerity.

We say railway track, but actually there is no such thing. Sincerity itself is the railway track. The sight we see from the train will change, but we are always running on the same track. And there is no beginning or no end to the track, beginningless and endless track. There is no starting point nor goal, nothing to attain. Just to run on the track is our way. This is the nature of our zen practice.

But when you become curious about the railway track, danger is there. You should not see the railway track. If you look at the track you will become dizzy. You should just appreciate the sight you will see from the train. That is our way. There is no need for the passengers to be curious about the track. Someone will take care of it; Buddha will take care of it. But sometimes we try to explain the railway track because we become curious if something is always the same. We wonder, "How is it possible for the Bodhisattva always to be the same? What is his secret?" But there is no secret. Everyone has the same nature as the railway track.

There were two good friends, Cho-Kei and Ho-Fuku. They were talking about the Bodhisattva's way, and Cho-Kei said, "Even if the arhat (ardenlightened one) were to have evil desires, still the Tathagata (Buddha) does not have two kinds of words. I say that the Tathagata has words, but no dualistic words." Ho-Fuku said, "Even though you say so, your comment is not perfect." Cho-Kei asked, "What is your understanding of the Tathagata's words?" Ho-Fuku said, "We have had enough discussion, so let's have a cup of tea!" Ho-Fuku did not give his friend an answer, because it is impossible to give a verbal interpretation of our way. Nevertheless, as a part of their practice these two good friends discussed the Bodhisattva's way, even though they did not expect to find a new interpretation. So Ho-Fuku answered, "Our discussion is over. Let's have a cup of tea!" That's a very good answer, isn't it?

So now I should say, " I am hungry, so let's have breakfast ! " My talk is over; your listening is over. There is no need to remember what I say; there is no need to understand what I say. You understand; you have full understanding within yourself. There is no problem. But something has to go on the track. We have a railway track, and we have some passengers, and so we should have a train. So.. (getting up).. train starts for the dining room !

Repetition

" If you lose the spirit of repetition, the kind of practice we stress will be quite difficult. "

Indian thought before Buddha was based on the idea of human beings as a combination of spiritual and physical elements. They thought of the physical as binding to the spiritual element, and their religious practice aimed at making the physical element weaker in order to make the spiritual element freer and more powerful. So they practiced asceticism. But the practice of asceticism will make our religious practice more and more idealistic, because there is no limit to the effort of making our physical power weaker. This ascetic effort can continue until we die, when it will be the end of the war. But according to Indian thought, even if we die, we will return in another life, and continue our struggle. We will repeat it over and over again, without ever attaining perfect enlightenment. And even if you think you can make your physical strength weak enough to free your spiritual power, it will work only as long as you practice asceticism. If you resume your everyday life your weak body will be of no use, and you will only have to build it up again. And then you will have to repeat the same process over and over again. We laugh at this, but actually some people continue this kind of practice even today. But however hard we may practice this way, it will not result in any actual progress.

Buddha's way was quite different from this kind of practice. At first he studied Hindu philosophy and

practiced asceticism. But Buddha was not interested in the elements comprising human beings, nor in metaphysical theories of existence. He was more concerned about how he, himself, existed in this moment. That was his point. You make bread from flour. How flour becomes bread when put in the oven was for Buddha the most important thing. How we become enlightened was his main interest. The enlightened person is some perfect, desirable character, for himself and for others. Buddha wanted to find out how human beings develop this ideal character - how various sages in the past became sages. In order to find out how dough became perfect bread, he made it over and over again, until he became quite successful. That was his practice.

But we may find it not so interesting to cook the same thing over and over again every day. It is rather tedious, you may say. If you lose the spirit of repetition it will become quite difficult, but it will not be difficult if you are full of strength and vitality. Anyway, we cannot keep still; we have to do something. So if you do something, you should be very observant, and careful, and alert. Our way is to put the dough in the oven and watch it carefully. Once you know how the dough becomes bread, you will understand enlightenment. So how this physical body becomes a sage is our main interest. We are not so concerned about what flour is, or what dough is, or what a sage is. A sage is a sage. Metaphysical explanations of human nature are not the point.

So the kind of practice we stress thus cannot become too idealistic. If an artist becomes too idealistic, he will commit suicide, because between his ideal and his actual ability there is a great gap. Because there is no bridge long enough to go across the gap, he will become despairing. That is the usual spiritual way. But our spiritual ⁸way is not so idealistic. In some sense we should be idealistic; at least we should be interested in making bread which tastes and looks good ! Actual practice is repeating over and over again until you find out how to become bread. There is no secret in our way. Just to practice zazen and put ourselves into the oven is our way.

Zen and Excitement

" Zen is not some kind of excitement but concentration on our usual everyday routine. "

My master died when I was thirty-one. Although I wanted to devote myself just to zen practice at Eihei-ji monastery, I had to succeed my master at his temple. I became quite busy, and being so young I had many difficulties. These difficulties gave me some experience, but those experiences meant nothing compared with the true, calm, serene way of life.

It is necessary for us to keep the constant way. Zen is not some kind of excitement, but concentration on our usual everyday routine. If you become too busy and too excited, your mind becomes rough and ragged. This is not good. If possible, try to be always calm and joyful and to keep yourself from excitement. Usually we become busier and busier, day by day, year after year, especially in our modern world. If I go back to Japan this summer I know I shall be astonished by the changes in Japanese life. It can't be helped. But if we become interested in some excitement this change will be accelerated; we will become completely involved in our busy life, and we will be lost. But if your mind is calm and constant, you can keep yourself away from the noisy world even though in the midst of it. In the midst of noise and change, your mind will be quiet and stable.

Zen is not something to get excited about. Some people start to practice zen just out of curiosity, and they only make themselves busier. If your practice makes you worse, it is ridiculous. I think that if you try to come here to zazen once a week, that will make you busy enough. Don't be too interested in zen. When young people get excited about zen they often give up schooling and go to some mountain or forest in order to sit. That kind of interest is not true interest.

Just continue in your calm, ordinary practice and your character will be built up. If your mind is always busy there will be no time to build, and you will not be successful, particularly if you work too hard on it. Building character is like making bread -- you have to mix it little by little, step by step, and moderate temperature is needed. You know yourself quite well, and you know how much temperature you need. You know exactly what you need. But if you get too excited, you will forget how much temperature is good for you, and you will lose your own way. This is very dangerous.

Buddha said the same thing about the good ox driver. The driver knows how much load the ox can carry, and he keeps the ox from being overloaded. You know your way and your state of mind. Don't carry too much! Buddha also said that building character is like building a dam. You should be very careful in making the bank. If you try to do it all at once, water will leak from it. Make the bank carefully and you will end up with a fine dam for the reservoir.

Our unexciting way of practice may appear to be very negative. This is not so. It is just very plain.

It is a wise and effective way to work on ourselves.

I find this point very difficult for people, especially young people to understand. On the other hand it may look like I am speaking about gradual attainment. This is not so either. In fact, this is the sudden way, because when your practice is calm and ordinary, everyday life itself is enlightenment.

... practice should be allowed to be...
... attainment is...
... usually when you are...
... something, you should be...
... attainment...
... attainment...
... of the effort, if you are...
... attainment, there is a...
... to do something...
... when you make...
... thing, some...
... involved in...
... If your...
... will know...
... what you do...
... So you should...
... This point is...
... not subtle enough to realize this point, and we go in the wrong direction.

... all of us are doing the same thing, which is the

Right Effort

" If your practice is good, you may become proud of it. What you do is good, but something more is added to it. Pride is extra. Right effort is to get rid of something extra. "

The most important point in our practice is to have right effort. The right effort which is directed in the right direction is necessary. If your effort is headed in the wrong direction, especially if you are not aware of this, it is deluded effort. Our effort in our practice should be directed from being to non-being, from achievement to non-achievement.

Usually when you do something you want to achieve something, you attach to some result. From achievement to non-achievement means to get rid of some evil result of the effort. If you do something in the spirit of non-achievement, there is a good quality in it. If so, just to do something without any particular effort is enough. But when you make some special effort to achieve something, some excessive quality, some extra element is involved in it. You should get rid of excessive things. If your practice is good, without being aware of it, you will become proud of your practice. That pride is extra. What you do is good, but something more is added to it. So you should get rid of that something which is extra. This point is very, very important. But usually we are not subtle enough to realize this point, and we go in the wrong direction.

As all of us are doing the same thing, making the

same mistake, we do not realize it. So without realizing it, we are making many mistakes. And we create problems between us. This kind of bad effort is called being 'dharma-ridden' or 'practice-ridden'. You are involved in some idea of practice or attainment, and you cannot get out of it. When you are involved in some dualistic idea, it means your practice is not pure. By purity we do not mean to polish something, trying to make some impure thing pure. By purity we just mean things as they are. When something is added that is impure. When something becomes dualistic, that is not pure. If you think ^{that} if you practice zazen you will get something, already you are involved in some impure practice. It is all right to ~~say~~ there is practice, and there is enlightenment, but we should not be caught by the statement. You should not be tainted by it. When you practice zazen, just practice zazen. If enlightenment comes, it just comes. We should not attach to the attainment. The true quality of zazen is always there, even if you are not aware of it, so forget all about what you think you may have gained from it. Just do it. The quality of zazen will express itself; then you will have it.

People ask what it means to practice zazen with no gaining idea, what kind of effort is necessary for that kind of practice. The answer is: effort to get rid of something extra from our practice. If some extra idea comes, you should try to stop it; you should remain in pure practice. That is the point toward which our effort is directed.

We say, " To hear the sound of one hand clapping. " Usually for us this is the sound (demonstrating by clapping his hands together), but this is not sound (demonstrating as if clapping with just one hand). But actually this (one hand) is sound. Even though you do not hear it, there is sound. If you clap with two hands, you can hear the sound. But if sound did not already exist before you clapped, you could not make the sound. Before you make it there is sound. Because there is sound, you can make it, and you can hear it. Sound is everywhere. If you just practice it, there is sound. Don't try to listen to it. If you do not listen to it, the sound is all over. Because you try to hear it, sometimes there is sound, and sometimes there is no sound. Do you understand ? Even though you do not do anything, you have the quality of zazen always. But if you try to find it, if you try to see the quality, you have no quality.

You are living in this world as one individual, but before you take the form of a human being, you are already there, always there. We are always here. Do you understand ? You think before you were born you were not here. But how is it possible for you to appear in this world, when there is no you ? Because you are already there, so you can appear in the world. And it is not possible for something to vanish which does not exist. Because something is there, something can vanish. You may think that when you die, you disappear, you no longer exist. But even though you vanish, something

which is existent cannot be non-existent. That is the magic. We ourselves cannot put any magic spells on this world. The world is its own magic. If we are looking at something, it can vanish from our sight, but if we do not try to see it, that something cannot vanish. Because you are watching it, it can disappear, but if no one is watching, how is it possible for anything to disappear? If someone is watching you, you can escape from him, but if no one is watching, you cannot escape from yourself.

So try not to see something in particular; try not to achieve anything special. You already have everything in your own pure quality. If you understand this ultimate fact there is no fear. There may be some difficulty, of course, but there is no fear. If people have difficulty without being aware of the difficulty, that is true difficulty. They may appear very confident, they may think they are making a big effort in the right direction, but without knowing it, what they do comes out of fear. Something may vanish for them. But if your effort is in the right direction, then there is no fear of losing anything. Even if it is in the wrong direction, if you are aware of that, you will not be deluded. There is nothing to lose. There is only the constant pure quality of right practice.

NO TRACE

" When you do something, you should burn yourself completely like a good bonfire, leaving no trace of yourself. "

When we practice zazen our mind is calm and quite simple. But usually our mind is very busy and complicated, and it is difficult to be concentrated on what we are doing. This is because before we act we think, and this thinking leaves some trace. Our activity is shadowed by some preconceived idea. The thinking not only leaves some trace or shadow, but also gives us many other notions about other activities and things. These traces and notions make our minds very complicated. When we do something with a quite simple clear mind, we have no notion or shadows, and our activity is strong and straightforward. But when we do something with complicated mind, in relation to other things or people, or society, our activity becomes very complex.

Most people have a double or triple notion in one activity. We say, " To catch two birds with one stone. " That is what people usually try to do. Because they want to catch too many birds they find it difficult to be concentrated on one activity, and they may end up not catching any birds at all ! That kind of thinking always leaves its shadow on their activity. The shadow is not actually the thinking itself. Of course it is often necessary to think before we act and make preparation. But right thinking does not leave any shadow. Thinking which leaves traces comes out of your relative confused

mind. Relative mind is the mind, which sets itself in relation to other things, thus limiting itself. It is this small mind which creates gaining ideas and leaves traces of itself.

If you leave a trace of your thinking on your activity, you will be attached to the trace. For instance, you may say, " This is what I have done ! " But actually it is not so. In your recollection you may say, " I did such and such a thing in some certain way ", but actually that is never exactly what happened. When you think in this way you limit the actual experience of what you have done. So if you attach to the idea of what you have done, you are involved in some selfish ideas.

Often we think what we have done is good, but it may not actually be so. When we become old, we are often very proud of what we have done. When others listen to someone proudly telling something which he has done, they will feel funny, because they know his recollection is one-sided. They know that what he has told them is not exactly what he did. Moreover, if he is proud of what he did, that pride will create some problem for him. Repeating his recollections in this way his personality will be twisted more and more, until he becomes quite a disagreeable stubborn fellow. This is an example of leaving a trace of one's thinking in mind. We should not forget what we did, but it should not leave a trace. To leave a trace is not the same as to remember something. It is necessary to remember what we have done, but we should not become attached to what we have done in some

special sense. What we call 'attachment' is just these traces of our thought and activity.

In order not to have any traces, when you do something, you should do it with your whole body and mind; you should be concentrated on what you do. You should do it completely, like a good bonfire. You should not be a smoky fire. You should burn yourself completely. If you do not burn yourself completely, a trace of yourself will be left in what you do. You will have something remaining which is not completely burned out. Zen activity is activity which is completely burned out, with nothing remaining but ashes. This is the goal of our practice. That is what Dogen meant when he said, "Ashes do not come back to firewood". Ash is ash. Ash should be completely ash. The firewood should be firewood. When this kind of activity takes place, one activity covers everything.

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So our practice is not a matter of one hour or two hours, or one day or one year. If you practice zazen with your whole body and mind, even for a moment, that is zazen. So moment after moment you should devote yourself to your practice. You should not have any remains after you do something. But this does not mean to forget all about it. If you understand this point, all the dualistic thinking and all the problems of life will vanish.

When you practice zen you become one with zen. There is no you or no zazen. When you bow, there is no Buddha or no you. One complete bowing takes place, that's all. This is nirvana. When Buddha transmitted our practice

to Mahakasyapa he just picked up a flower with a smile. Only Mahakasyapa understood what he meant; no one else understood. We don't know if this is a historical event or not, but it means something. It is a demonstration of our traditional way. Some activity which covers everything is true activity, and the secret of this activity is transmitted from Buddha to us. This is Zen practice, not some teaching taught by Buddha, or some rules of life set up by him.. The teaching, or the rules should be changed according to the place, or according to the people who observe them, but the secret of this practice cannot be changed. It is always true.

So for us there is no other way to live in this world. I think this is quite true, and this is easy to accept, easy to understand, and easy to practice. If you compare the kind of life based on this practice with what is happening in this world, or in human society, you will find out just how valuable is the truth Buddha left us. The truth is quite simple, and practice is quite simple. But even so, we should not ignore it; we must discover its great value. Usually if it is too simple we say, " Oh, I know that ! It is quite simple. Everyone knows that. " But if we do not find its value it means nothing. It is the same as not knowing. The more you understand our culture the more you will understand how true and how necessary our teaching is. Instead of criticizing our culture, you should devote your mind and body to practicing this simple way. It may be all right for the people who are too attached to our culture to be

critical. Their critical attitude means they are coming back to the simple truth left by Buddha. But our approach is just to be concentrated on simple practice and simple understanding of life. Anyways there should be no traces in our activity. We should not attach to some fancy ideas or to some beautiful things. We should not seek for something good. The truth is always near at hand, within your reach.

To Give

" To give is non-attachment. "

Every existence in nature, every existence in the human world, every cultural work that we create, is something which was given, or is being given to us, relatively speaking. But as everything is originally one, we are, in actuality, giving out everything. Moment after moment we are creating something, and this is the joy of our life. But this 'I' which is creating and always giving out something is not the 'small I'; it is the 'big I'. Even though you do not realize the oneness of this 'big I' with everything, when you give something you feel good because, at that time, you feel at one with what you are giving. This is why it feels better to give than to take.

We say, " dana prajna paramita ". 'Dana' means 'to give; 'prajna' is 'wisdom', and 'paramita' means 'to cross over', or 'to reach the other shore'. Our life can be seen as a crossing of a river. The goal of our life's effort is to reach the other shore, nirvana. 'Prajna paramita', the true wisdom of life, is that in each step of the way, the other shore is actually reached. To reach the other shore with each step of the crossing is the way of true living. 'Dana prajna paramita' is one of the six ways of true living. The second is 'sila prajna paramita', or the Buddhist precepts. Then there are 'kshanti prajna paramita', or endurance; 'virya prajna paramita', or zeal and constant effort; 'dhyana prajna

paramita', or Zen practice, and 'prajna paramita', or wisdom. Actually these six 'prajna paramita' are one, but as we can observe life from various sides, we count six.

Dogen Zenji said, " To give is non-attachment?. That is, just not to attach to anything is to give. ^{And} It does not matter what is given. To give a penny, or a piece of leaf is 'dana prajna paramita'; to give one line, or one word of teaching is 'dana prajna paramita'. If given in the spirit of non-attachment, the material offering and the teaching offering have the same value. With the right spirit, all that we do, all that we create is 'dana prajna paramita'. So Dogen said, " To produce something, to participate in human activity is also 'dana prajna paramita'. To provide a ferry boat for people, or to make a bridge for people is 'dana prajna paramita'.¹¹ Actually to give one line of the teaching may be to make a ferry boat for someone !

According to Christianity every existence in nature is something which was created for or given to us by God. That is the perfect idea of giving. But Christianity also says that God created man. Thus we are somehow separate from God, and as separate, we are liable to think we have the ability to create something separate, something not given by Him. For instance, we create airplanes and free-ways. And when we repeat, " I create, I create, I create ", soon we forget who is actually the 'I' which creates the various things; we soon forget about God. This is the

danger of human culture. Actually, to create with the 'big I' is to give; we cannot create and own what we create for ourselves, as everything was created by God. This point should not be forgotten. But because we do forget who is doing the creating and the reason for the creation, we become attached to the material or exchange value. This kind of value has absolutely no value in comparison to the absolute value of something as God's creation. Even though something has no material or relative value to any ^{particular} of the 'small is', it has absolute value in itself. Not to be attached to something is to be aware of its absolute value. Everything you do should be based on such an awareness and not on material, or self-centered ideas of value. Then whatever you do is 'dana prajna paramita', is true giving.

When we sit in the cross-legged posture we resume our fundamental activity of creation. There are, perhaps three kinds of creation. The first is to be aware of ourselves after we finish zazen. When we sit we are nothing, do not realize even what we are; we just sit. But when we stand up, we are there! That is the first step in creation. When you are there, everything else is there; everything is created all at once. When we emerge from nothing, when everything emerges from nothing, we see it all as a fresh new creation. This is non-attachment. The second kind of creation is when you act, or produce or prepare something like food or tea. The third kind is to create something within yourself, such as education, or culture, or art, or some system for our society. So there are three kinds of creation. But if

you forget the first, the most important one, the other two will be like children who have lost their parents; their creation will mean nothing.

Usually everyone forgets about zazen. Everyone forgets about God. They work very hard at the second and third kinds of creation, but God does not help the activity. How is it possible for Him to help when He does not realize who He is ? That is why we have so many problems in this world. When we forget the fundamental source of our creating we are like children who do not know what to do when they lose their parents.

If you understand 'dana prajna paramita', you will understand how it is we create so many problems for ourselves. Of course, to live is to create problems. If we did not appear in this world, our parents would have no difficulty with us! Just by appearing we create problems for them. This is all right. Everyone creates some problems. But usually people think that when they die, that everything is over, the problems disappear. But your death may create problems too ! Actually our problems should be solved or dissolved in this life. But if we are aware that what we do or what we create is really the gift of the 'big I', then we won't be attached to it, and we won't create problems for ourselves or for others.

And we should forget, day by day, what we have done; this is true non-attachment. And we should do something new. To do something new, of course we must know our past and this is all right. But we should not keep holding on to anything we have done; we should only reflect on

it. And we must have some idea of what we should do in future, but the future is the future, the past is the past; now we should work on something new. This is our attitude, and how we should live in this world. This is 'dana prajna paramita', to give something, or to create something for ourselves. So to do something through and through is to resume to our true activity of creation. This is why we sit. If we do not forget this point, everything will be carried on beautifully. But once we forget this point, the world will be filled with confusion.

Mistakes in Practice

" It is when your practice is rather greedy that you become discouraged with it. So you should be grateful that you have a sign, or warning signal to show you the weak point in your practice. "

There are several poor ways of practice which you should understand. Usually when you practice zazen you become very idealistic, and you set up some ideal or goal which you strive to attain or fulfill. But as I have often said, this is very absurd. When you are idealistic, you have some gaining idea within yourself; by the time you attain your ideal or goal your gaining idea will create another ideal. So as long as your practice is based on a gaining idea, and you practice zazen in an idealistic way, you will have not time actually to attain your ideal. Moreover you will be sacrificing the meat of your practice. Because your attainment is always ahead, you will always be sacrificing yourself now for some ideal in the future. You end up with nothing. This is very absurd; it is not adequate practice at all. But even worse than this idealistic attitude is to practice zazen in competition with someone else. When you do this you are in very bad shape. This is a poor, shabby kind of practice.

Our Soto way puts an emphasis on 'shikan taza', or just sitting. Actually we do not have any particular name for our practice; when we practice zazen we just practice it, and whether we find joy in our practice or

not, we just do it. Even though we are sleepy, and we are tired of practicing zazen, of repeating the same thing day after day, even so, we continue our practice. Whether or not someone encourages our practice, we just do it. Even when you practice zazen alone, without a teacher, I think you will find some way to tell whether your practice is adequate or not. When you are tired of sitting, or when you are disgusted with your practice, you should recognize a warning signal. You become discouraged with your practice when your practice has been idealistic. You have some gaining idea in your practice, and it is not pure enough. It is when your practice is rather greedy, that you become discouraged with it. So you should be grateful that you have a sign, or warning signal to show you the weak point in your practice. At that time, forgetting all about your mistake, and renewing your way, you can resume to your original practice. This is a very important point.

So as long as you continue your practice you are quite safe, but as it is very difficult to continue, you must find some way to encourage yourself. As it is hard to encourage yourself without becoming involved in some poor kind of practice, to continue our pure practice by yourself may be rather difficult. This is why we have a teacher. With your teacher you will correct your practice. Of course you will have a very hard time with him, but even though you find it hard, you will always be safe from wrong practice.

Most Zen Buddhist priests have had a difficult time with their masters. When they talk about the difficulties

they have had, you may think that without this kind of hardship you cannot practice zazen. But this is not true. Whether you have difficulties in your practice or not, as long as you continue it, you have pure practice in its true sense. Even when you are not aware of it, you have it. So Dogen Zenji said, " Don't think you will necessarily be aware of your own enlightenment. " Whether or not you are aware of it, you have your own true enlightenment within your practice.

Another mistake will be to practice for the sake of the joy you find in it. Actually, when your practice is involved in a feeling of joy, it is not in very good shape either. Of course this is not poor practice, but compared to the true practice it is not so good. In Hinayana Buddhism practice is classified in four ways. The best way is just to do it without having any joy in it, not even spiritual joy. This way is just to do it, forgetting your physical and mental feeling, forgetting all about yourself in your practice. This is the fourth stage, or the highest stage. The next highest stage is to have just physical joy in your practice. At this stage you find some pleasure in practice, and you will practice because of the pleasure you find in it. In the second stage you have both mental and physical joy, or good feeling. These two middle stages are stages in which you practice zazen because you feel good in your practice. The first stage is the stage where you have no thinking, and you have no curiosity in your practice. These four stages also apply to our Mahayana practice.

and the highest stage is just to practice it.

If you find some difficulty in your practice, that is the warning that you have some wrong idea, so you have to be careful. But don't give up your practice; continue it, knowing your weakness. Here there is no gaining idea. Here there is no fixed idea of attainment. You don't say, "This is enlightenment," or "That is not right practice." Even in wrong practice, when you realize it and continue it, that is right practice. Our practice cannot be perfect. But without being discouraged by it, we should continue it. This, in short, is the secret of practice.

And if you want to find some encouragement in your discouragement, getting tired of practice is itself the encouragement. You encourage yourself when you get tired of it. When you don't want to do it, that is the warning signal. It is like having a toothache when your teeth are not so good. When you feel some pain in your teeth, you go to the dentist. That is our way.

Yesterday someone whom I met in New York came to see me. He had been working with U Thant for eighteen years, and he had practiced various ways of meditation. He told me about his experiences, and he asked me which of the kinds of practice was like our way. When I told him, he was very glad to hear it. He said, "I thought that this was the best kind of practice." And we talked about the conflict in our world. The cause of conflict is some fixed idea or one-sided idea. So when everyone knows the value of pure practice, we will have no conflict in our

in our world. He agreed with me. This is the secret of my practice and Dogen Zenji's way. He repeats this point in his Shobogenzo*.

If you understand the cause of conflict as some fixed or one-sided idea, you can find meaning in various practices without being caught by any of them. If you do not realize this point you will be easily caught by some particular way, and you will say, "This is enlightenment! This is perfect practice. This is our way. The rest of the ways are not perfect. This is the best way." This is a big mistake. There is no particular way in true practice. You should find your own way, and you should know what kind of practice you have right now. Knowing both the advantages and disadvantages of some special practice, you can practice that special way without danger. But if you have a one-sided attitude, you will ignore the disadvantage of the practice, emphasizing only its good part. Eventually you will discover the worst side of the practice, and become discouraged when it is too late. This is very silly. We should be very grateful to the ancient teachers to point out this mistake.

Limiting Your Activity

" Usually when someone believes in a particular religion, his attitude becomes more and more a sharp angle pointing away from himself. In our way the point of the angle is always towards you yourself. "
 OURSELVES.

In our practice we have no particular purpose of goal, nor any special object of worship. In this respect our practice is somewhat different from the usual religious practices. Jo-shu said, " A clay Buddha cannot cross water; a bronze Buddha cannot get through a furnace; a wooden Buddha cannot get through fire ". Whatever it is, if your practice is directed toward some particular object, such as a clay, a bronze, or a wooden Buddha, it will not always work. So as long as you have some particular goal in your practice, that practice will not help you completely. It may help as long as you are directed towards that goal, but when you resume your everyday life, it will not work.

You may think that if there is no purpose, or no goal in our practice we won't know what to do. But there is a way. The way to practice without having any goal is to limit your activity, or be concentrated on what you are doing in this moment. Instead of having some particular object in mind, you should limit your activity. When your mind is wandering about elsewhere you have no chance to express yourself. But if you limit your activity to what you can do just now, in this moment, then you can express fully your true nature, which is the universal

or Buddha nature. This is our way.

When we practice zazen we limit our activity to the smallest extent. Just keeping the right posture and being concentrated on sitting is how we express the universal nature. Then you become Buddha, and you express Buddha nature. So instead of having some object of worship we just concentrate on the activity which we do in each moment. When you bow, you should just bow; when you sit, you just sit; when you eat, you just eat. If you do this the universal nature is there. We call it 'ichigyo-sanmai', or one-act samadhi. 'Sanmai' or ssamadhi' is concentration. 'Ichigyo' is one practice.

I think some of you who practice zazen here may believe in some other religion, but I don't mind. Our practice has nothing to do with some particular religious belief. And for you, there is no need to hesitate to practice our way, because it has nothing to do with Christianity or Shintoism, or Hinduism. Our practice is for everyone. Usually when someone believes in a particular religion, his attitude becomes more and more a sharp angle pointing away from himself; But our way is not like this. In our way the point of the sharp angle is always toward ~~you~~ yourself, not away from yourself. So there is no need to worry about the difference between Buddhism and the religion you may believe in.

Joshu's statement about the different Buddhas concerns those who direct their practice towards some particular Buddha. One kind of Buddha will not serve your purpose completely. You will have to throw it away sometime, or at least ignore it. But if you understand the secret of

of our practice, wherever you go you yourself are the 'boss'. No matter what the situation, you cannot neglect Buddha, because you yourself are Buddha. Only this Buddha will help you completely.

Forgetting
Yourself

Study Yourself

" So to have some deep feeling about Buddhism is not the point. We just do what we should do, like eating supper and going to bed. This is Buddhism. "

The purpose of studying Buddhism is not to study Buddhism, but to study ourselves. It is impossible to study ourselves without some teaching. If you want to know what water is you need science, and the scientist needs a laboratory. In the laboratory there are various ways in which to study what water is. Thus it is possible to know what kind of elements water has, the various forms it takes, and its nature. But it is impossible thereby to know water in itself. It is the same thing with us. We need some teaching, but just by studying the teaching alone, it is impossible to know what 'I' in myself am. Through the teaching we may understand our human nature. But the teaching is not we ourselves; it is some explanation of ourselves. So if you are attached to the teaching, or to the teacher, that is a big mistake. The moment you meet a teacher you should leave the teacher, and you should be independent. You need a teacher so that you can become independent. If you are not attached to him, the teacher will point out to you the way to yourself. You have a teacher for yourself, not for the teacher.

Rinzai analyzed how to teach his disciples in four ways. Sometimes he talked about the disciple himself; sometimes he talked about the teaching itself; sometimes he gave an interpretation of the disciple or the teaching;

and finally, sometimes he did not give any instruction at all to his disciples. He knew that even without being given any instruction, a student is a student. Strictly speaking, there is no need to teach the student, because the student himself is Buddha, even though he may not be aware of it. And even though he is aware of his true nature, if he is attached to this awareness, that is already wrong. When he is not aware of it, he has everything, but when he becomes aware of it he thinks that what he is aware of is himself, which is a big mistake.

When you do not hear anything from the teacher, but just sit, this is called teaching without teaching. But sometimes this is not sufficient, so we listen to lectures and have discussions. But we should remember that the purpose of practice in this place is to study ourselves. To be independent we study. Like the scientist we have to have some means by which to study. We need a teacher because it is impossible to study ourselves by ourselves. But you should not make a mistake. You should not take what you have learned here for you yourself. The study you make here is a part of your everyday life, a part of your incessant activity. In this sense there is no difference between the practice here and the activity you have in everyday life. So to find the meaning of your life here is to find the meaning of your everyday activity. To be aware of the meaning of your life you practice zazen.

When I was at Eihei-ji Monastery, everyone was just doing what they should do. That's all. It is the same, as waking up in the morning; we have to get up. At Eihei-ji monastery, when we had to sit, we sat; when we had to bow to Buddha, we bowed to Buddha. That's all. And when we were practicing, we did not feel anything special. We did not even feel that we were leading a monastic life. For us, the monastic life was the usual life, and the people who came from the city were unusual people. When we saw them we felt, "Oh, some unusual people came!" But once having left Eihei-ji and, after being away for some time, coming back, it was different. When I came back, I heard the various sounds of practice - the bells and the monks reciting the sutra, and I felt a deep feeling. There were tears flowing out of my eyes, nose, and mouth! It is the people who are outside of the monastery who feel its atmosphere. Those who are practicing actually do not feel anything. I think that that is true for everything. When we hear the sound of the pine trees on a windy day, perhaps the wind is just blowing, and the pine tree is just standing in the wind. That's all that they are doing. But the people who listen to the wind in the tree will write a poem, or will feel something unusual. That is, I think, the way everything is.

So to feel something about Buddhism is not the main point. Whether that feeling is good or bad is out of the question. We don't mind whatever it is. Buddhism is not good or bad. We are doing what we should do. That is Buddhism. Of course some encouragement is necessary,

but that encouragement is just encouragement. It is not the true purpose of practice. It is just medicine. When we become discouraged we want some medicine. When we are in good spirits we do not need any medicine. You should not mistake medicine for food. Sometimes medicine is necessary, but it should not become our food.

So, of Rinzai's four ways of practice, the perfect one is not to give a student any interpretation of himself, nor to give him any encouragement. If we think of ourselves as our bodies, the teaching then may be our clothing. Sometimes we talk about our clothing; sometimes we talk about our body. But neither body or clothing are actually we ourselves. We ourselves are the big activity. We are just expressing the smallest particle of the big activity, that's all. So it's all right to talk about ourselves, but actually there is no need to do so. Before we open our mouths, we are already expressing the big existence, including ourselves. So the purpose of talking about ourselves is to correct the misunderstanding we have when we are attached to any particular temporal form or color of the big activity. It is necessary to talk about what our body is and what our activity is so that we may not make any mistake about them. So to talk about ourselves is actually to forget about ourselves.

Dogen Zengi said, " To study Buddhism is to study ourselves. / To study ourselves is to forget ourselves. " When you become attached to the temporal expression of your true nature, it is necessary to talk about Buddhism, or

else you will think the temporal expression is it. But this particular expression of it is not it. And yet at the same time it is it ! For awhile this is it; for the smallest part~~ite~~ of time, this is it. But it is not always so; the very next instant it is not so; thus it is not it. So that you will realize this fact, it is necessary to study Buddhism. But the purpose of studying Buddhism is to study ourselves and to forget ourselves. When you forget yourself, you will actually be the true activity of the big existence, or reality itself. When we realize this fact, there is no problem whatsoever in this world. And you can enjoy your life without having any problems or difficulties. The purpose of this practice is to be aware of this fact.