

# To Polish A Tile

" When you become you, zen becomes zen. "

Zen stories or koans are very difficult to understand before you understand what we are doing moment after moment. But if you know exactly what we are doing in each moment, you will not find koans so difficult. There are so many koans. Recently I have talked to you several times about a frog, and each time everybody laughs. But a frog is very interesting. He sits like this too you know. But he doesn't think that he's doing anything so special. When you come and sit here you may think you are doing some special thing. While your husband is sleeping, you are here practicing zazen ! You are doing some special thing, and your husband is lazy ! That may be your understanding of zazen. But look at the frog. A frog also sits like this, but he has no idea of zazen. Watch him. If something annoys him, he will do like this ( making a face ). If something comes along to eat, he will eat ( imitating a frog snapping at an insect ), and he eats sitting. Actually that is our zazen. We are not doing any special thing.

Here is a kind of frog koan for you. Ba-so was a famous zen master called the horse-master. He was the disciple of Nanaku, one of the sixth patriarch's descendents. One day while he was studying under Nanaku, Ba-so was sitting practicing zazen. He was a big man of great physical build; when he talked his tongue reached to his

nose; his voice was loud and his zazen must have been very good. And he was sitting like a great mountain. And Nanaku saw him sitting like a frog. Nanaku asked, "What are you doing?" "I'm practicing zazen," Ba-so replied. "Why are you practicing zazen?" "I want to attain enlightenment; I want to be a Buddha," the disciple said. Do you know what the teacher did? He picked up a tile, and he started to polish it. In Japan, after taking a tile from the kiln, we polish it to give it a beautiful finish. So Nanaku picked up a tile and started to polish it. Ba-so, his disciple, asked, "What are you doing?" "I want to make this tile into a jewel," Nanaku said. "How is it possible to make a tile a jewel?" Ba-so asked. "How is it possible to become a Buddha by practicing zazen?" Nanaku replied. "Do you want to attain Buddhahood? There is no Buddhahood besides your ordinary mind. When a cart does not go, which do you whip, the cart or the horse? Which do you whip?" the master asked.

Nanaku's meaning here is that whatever you do, that is zazen. True zazen is beyond being in bed or sitting in the zendo. If your husband is in bed, that is zazen. If you think, "I am sitting here, and my husband is in bed," then even though you are sitting here in cross-legged position, that is not true zazen. You should be like a frog always. That is true zazen.

Dogen Zengi commented on this koan. He said, "When the horsemaster becomes the horse, zen becomes zen." When Ba-so becomes Ba-so, his zazen becomes true zazen, and

zen becomes zen. What is true zazen ? When you become you ! When you are you , then no matter what you do, that is zazen. Even though you are in bed, you may not be you most of the time. Even though you are sitting here, I wonder whether you are you in its true sense.

Here is another famous koan. Zui-kan was a zen master who always used to address himself. " Zui-kan ? " he'd call. And then he'd answer. " Hai ! " " Zui-kan ? " " Hai ! " Of course he was living all alone in his small zendo. And of course he knew who he was, But sometimes he lost himself. And whenever he lost himself, he would address himself, " Zui-kan ? " " Hai ! "

If we are like a frog, we are always ourselves. Even a frog sometimes loses himself, and he does this ( making a face ) ! And if something comes along, he will eat it ( snapping ). So I think a frog is always addressing himself. I think you should do that also. Even in zazen you will lose yourself. When you become sleepy, or when your mind starts to wander about, you lose yourself. When you become painful, " Why are my legs so painful ? " you lose yourself. Because you lose yourself, the problem you have will be a problem for you. If you do not lose yourself, then even though you have difficulty, there is actually no problem whatsoever. You just sit in the midst of the problem; when you are a part of the problem, or ~~when the problem is a part of you,~~ there is no problem, because you are the problem itself. The problem is you, yourself. If so, there is no problem.

When your life is always a part of your surroundings - in other words, when you are called back to yourself, right here - then there is no problem. When you start to wander about in some delusion which is something apart from you, yourself, then your surroundings are not real any more, and your mind is not real any more. If you, yourself are deluded, then your surroundings are also a misty foggy delusion. Once you are in the midst of delusion, there is no end to the delusion. One after another you will be involved in deluded ideas. Most people live in delusion, involved in their problem, ~~how~~ to solve their problem. But to live is actually to live in problems. And to solve the problem is to be a part of it, or to be one with it.

So which do you hit, the cart or the horse ? Which do you hit, you yourself, or your problems ? If you start wondering which you should hit, that means you have already started to wander about. But when you actually hit a horse, the cart will go. In truth the cart and the horse are not different. When you are you, there is no problem of whether you should hit the cart or the horse. When you are you, zazen becomes true zazen. So when you practice zazen, your problem will practice zazen, and everything else will practice zazen too. Even though your husband is in bed, he is also practicing zazen. ~~When you~~ practice zazen ! But when you do not practice true zazen, then there is your husband, and there is yourself - each quite different, quite separate from the other. So if you yourself have true practice, then everything else is practicing our way at the same time.

That is why we should always address ourselves, checking up on ourselves, like a doctor ( tapping himself ). This is very important. This kind of practice should be continued moment after moment incessantly. We say, " When the night is here, the dawn comes. " It means there is no gap between the dawn and the night. Before the summer is over, autumn comes. In this way we should understand our life. We should practice with this understanding, and solve our problems in this way. Actually just to work on the problem, if you do it with single-minded effort, is enough. You should just polish the tile; that is our practice. The purpose of practice is not to make a tile a jewel. Just continue sitting; that is practice in its true sense. It is not a matter of whether or not it is possible to attain Buddhahood, whether or not it is possible to make a tile a jewel. Just to work, just to live in this world with this understanding is the most important point. That is our practice. That is true zazen. So we say, " When you eat, eat ! " You should eat what is there, you know. Sometimes you don't eat it. Even though you are eating, your mind is somewhere else. You do not taste what you have in your mouth. As long as you can eat when you are eating, you are all right. Don't worry a bit. It means ~~when~~ you are you, yourself. <sup>I-xxx</sup>

When you are you, you see things as they are, and you become one with your surrounding. There is your

true self. There you have true practice; you have the practice of a frog. He is a good example of our practice. So when a frog becomes a frog, zen becomes zen. When you understand a frog through and through, you attain enlightenment; you are Buddha. and you are a good wife or daughter. This is zazen!

## Constancy

" People who know the state of emptiness will always be able to dissolve their problems by constancy. "

The message for us on the calendar today is 'Cultivate your own spirit'. It means not to go seeking for something outside of yourself. This is a very important point, and this is the only way to practice zen. Of course studying scriptures, or reciting the sutra, or sitting is zen; each of these activities should be zen. But if your effort or practice does not have the right orientation, it will not work at all. Not only will it not work, but it may spoil your pure nature. Then the more you know about zen, the more you will become spoiled. Your mind will be filled with rubbish; your mind will be stained.

It is quite usual for us to gather pieces of information from various sources, thinking in this way to increase our knowledge. Actually following this way we end up not knowing anything at all. Our understanding of Buddhism should not be just gathering many pieces of information, seeking to gain knowledge. Instead of gathering knowledge, you should clear your mind. If your mind is clear, true knowledge is already yours. When you listen to our teaching with a pure clear mind, you can accept it as if you were hearing something which you already knew. This is called emptiness, or omnipotent self, or knowing everything. When you know everything you are like a dark sky. Sometimes a flashing will come through the dark

sky; after it passes, you forget all about it; there is nothing left but the dark sky. And the sky is never surprised when all of a sudden a thunderbolt breaks through. And when the lightening does flash, a wonderful sight may be seen. When we have emptiness we are always prepared for watching the flashing.

In China Rozan is famous for its misty scenery. I haven't been to China yet, but there must be beautiful mountains there. And to see the white clouds or mist come and go through the mountains must be a very wonderful sight. Although it is wonderful, a Chinese poem says, "Rozan is famous for its hazy sight on a rainy day. Sekko, the great river, is famous for its tide, coming and going. That's all." That's all, but it is splendid! This is how we appreciate things.

So you should accept knowledge as if you were hearing something you already knew. But this does not mean to receive various pieces of information merely as an echo of your own opinions. It means that you should not be surprised at whatever you may see or hear. If you receive things just as an echo of yourself, you do not really see them, you do not fully accept them as they are. So when we say, "Rozan is famous for its misty sight," it does not mean to appreciate the mountains by recollecting some scenery we have seen before: "It is not so wonderful. I have seen that sight before, or I have painted much more beautiful paintings! Rozan is nothing!" This is not our way. If you are ready to accept things as they are you will receive them as old friends even though you



appreciate them with new feeling.

And we should not hoard knowledge ~~knowings~~; we should be free from our knowledge. If you collect various pieces of knowledge, as a collection it may be very good, but this is not our way. We should not try to surprise people by our wonderful treasures. We should not be interested in something special. If you want to appreciate something fully you should forget yourself. You should accept it like <sup>(the sky accepts)</sup> lightning flashing in <sup>the sky</sup> the utter darkness, of ~~the sky~~.

Sometimes we think it is impossible for us to understand something unfamiliar to us, but actually there is nothing unfamiliar to us. Some people may say, "It is almost impossible to understand Buddhism as our cultural background is so different. How is it possible to understand Oriental thought?" Of course Buddhism cannot be separated from its cultural background. This is true, but if a Japanese Buddhist comes to the United States he is no longer a Japanese. I am living in your cultural background. I am eating nearly the same food as you eat, and I am communicating with you in your language. Even though you do not understand me completely, I want to understand you. And I may understand you better than anyone who can speak and understand English. This is true. Even if I could not understand English at all, I think I could communicate with people. There is always a possibility of understanding as long as we exist in the utter darkness of the sky, and as long as we live in emptiness.

I have always said that you must be very patient if you want to understand Buddhism, but I have been seeking for a better word than patience. The usual translation of the Japanese word 'nin' is 'patience', but perhaps 'constancy' is a better word. You must force yourself to be patient, but in constancy there is no particular effort involved; there is only the constant ability to accept things as they are. For people who have no idea of emptiness this ability may appear to be patience, but patience can actually be non-acceptance. People who know, even if only intuitively, the state of emptiness, always have open the possibility of accepting things as they are. They can appreciate everything. In everything they do, even though it is very difficult, they will always be able to dissolve their problems by constancy.

'Nin' is how we cultivate our own spirit. 'Nin' is our way of continuous practice. We should always live in the dark empty sky. The sky is always the sky. Even though clouds and lightning come, the sky is not disturbed. Even if the flashing of enlightenment comes, our practice forgets all about it. Then it is ready for another enlightenment. One after another it is necessary for us to have enlightenment, if possible moment after moment. This is what is called enlightenment before you attain it, and after you attain it.

# Communication (I)

Without any intentional fancy way of adjusting yourself, to express yourself as you are is the most important thing. "

Communication is very important in zen practice. Because I cannot speak your language very well, I am always seeking some way of communicating with you. I think that <sup>t</sup>his kind of effort will result in something very good. We say <sup>that</sup> if you do not understand your master's words, you are not his disciple. To understand your master's words, or your master's language, is to understand your master himself. And when you understand him, his language is not just ordinary language, but language in its wider sense. Through your master's language, you understand more than what his words actually say.

When we say something, our subjective intention or situation is always involved. So there is no perfect word; some distortion is <sup>a</sup>lways present in your statement. But nevertheless, through our master's statement we have to understand the objective fact itself - the ultimate fact. By ultimate fact we do not mean something eternal or something constant, but we mean things as they are in each moment. You may call it being or reality.

To understand reality as a direct experience is the reason we practice zazen, and the reason we study Buddhism. By the study of Buddhism, you will understand your human nature, or your intellectual faculty, or the truth present in your human activity. And you can

take this human nature of yours into consideration when you seek to understand reality. But only by the actual practice of zen, can you experience reality directly and understand various statements made by your teacher or by Buddha in their true sense. Strictly speaking, it is not possible to speak about reality. Nevertheless, if you are a zen student you have to understand it directly through your master's words.

Your master's direct statement may not be only in words; his behavior is likewise a way of expressing himself. In zen we put emphasis on demeanor or behavior. By behavior we do not mean a particular way that you ought to behave, but rather the natural expression of yourself. We emphasize straight-forwardness. You should be true to your feelings, and to your mind, expressing yourself without any reservations. This helps the listener to understand more easily.

When you listen to someone, you should give up all your preconceived ideas and your subjective opinions; you should just listen to him, just observe what his way is. ~~That is how we communicate with each other.~~ We put very little emphasis on right or wrong, or good or bad. We just see things as they are with him and accept them. This is how we communicate with each other. Usually when you listen to some statement you hear it as a kind of echo of yourself. You are actually listening to your own opinion. If it agrees with your opinion you may accept it, but if it does not, you will reject it or you may not even really hear it. That is one danger when you listen to someone. The other danger is to be caught by the ~~opinion~~.

statement. If you do not understand your master's statement in its true sense, you will be easily caught by something which is involved in your subjective opinion, or by some particular way the statement is expressed. You will take what he says only as a statement, without understanding the spirit behind the words. This kind of danger is always there.

It is difficult to have good communication between parents and their children because parents always have their own intentions. Their intentions are nearly always good, but the way they speak, or the way they express themselves is often not so free; it is usually too one-sided and not realistic. We each have our own way of expressing ourselves, and it is difficult to change that way according to the circumstances. If parents can manage to express themselves in various ways according to each situation there will be no danger in the education of their children.. This however, is rather difficult. Even a zen master has his own way. When Nyshiaru Zengi his disciples he always said, " Go away ! " His students took him literally and left the way of expressing himself. In and he said, " Go away ! " / If things. habit, you will easily misunderstand express danger is always present in our r intention. listener or a disciple, it is nec

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from these various distortions. A mind full of preconceived ideas or subjective intentions or habits is not open to things as they are. That is why we practice zazen: to clear our mind which is related to something else.

To be quite natural to ourselves, and to follow what others say or do in the most appropriate way, is quite difficult. But if we try to adjust ourselves intentionally in some way, it is impossible to be natural. If you try to adjust yourself in a certain way you will lose yourself. So without any intentional fancy way of adjusting yourself, to express yourself quite freely is the most important thing to make you happy, and to make others happy.

And you will acquire this kind of ability by practicing zazen. Zen is not some special fancy art of living. Our teaching is just to live always in reality in its exact sense; to make our effort moment after moment to do so is our way. In its exact sense, the only thing we actually can study in our life is that on which we are working in each moment. We cannot even study Buddha's words. To study Buddha's words in their exact sense means to study them through some activity which you face moment after moment. So we should be concentrated with all our <sup>full</sup> mind and body on what we do, and we should be faithful subjectively and objectively to ourselves, and especially to our feelings. Even when you do not feel so well it is better to express how you feel without any particular attachment or intention.





# Communication (II)

Trudy:  
leave the "to's"  
here.

" Big mind <sup>you</sup> is something to express, not <sup>now</sup> something to figure out. Big mind is something which you have, not something to seek for. "

MY The more you understand our thinking, the more you find it difficult to talk about it. The purpose of talk is to give some idea of our way, but our original way is not something to talk about, but something to practice. So the best way is just to practice without saying anything. When we talk about our way we are apt to create some misunderstanding, because the true way always has at least two sides, the negative and the positive. When we talk about the negative side, the positive side is missing, and when we talk about the positive side, the negative side is missing. We cannot speak in a positive and a negative way at the same time. So we don't know what to say. Actually it is almost impossible to talk about what Buddhism is. So not to say anything, and just to practice it, is the best way. Showing one finger, or drawing a round circle may be the way, or simply to bow.

But if we understand this point, we will understand how to talk about Buddhism, and we will have perfect communication. To talk about something will be one of our practices, and to listen to the talk will also be practice. When we practice zazen we just practice zazen, without any gaining idea. When we talk about something we just talk about something, just the positive or the negative side, without trying to express some intellectual, one-

sided idea. And you listen to it without trying to figure out some intellectual understanding, without trying to understand it from just a one-sided view. This is how we talk about our teaching and how we listen to a talk.

The Soto way always has double meaning, positive and negative. And our way is both Hinayanistic and Mahayanistic. I always say our practice is very Hinayanistic / - Hinayana practice with Mahayana spirit - rigid formal practice with informal mind. Although our practice looks very formal, our minds are not formal. Although we practice zazen every morning in the same way, that is no reason to call this formal practice. It is your discrimination which makes it formal or informal. Inside of the practice itself, there is no formal or informal. If you have Mahayana mind, something which people call formal may be informal. So we say that observing the precepts in Hinayana way is violating the precepts in Mahayana way. Because of your observing our precepts in just a formal way, you lose your Mahayana spirit. Before you understand this point, you always have a problem: whether you should observe our way literally, or whether you should not concern yourself about the formality which we have. But if you understand our way completely, there is no such problem because whatever you do, that is practice. As long as you have Mahayana mind, there's no Mahayana or Hinayana practice. Even though it looks as if you were violating the precepts, you are actually observing them in their true sense. The point is whether you have the big mind or the small mind. In short, when <sup>you</sup> ~~we~~ do <sup>some</sup> ~~everything~~ without thinking <sup>whether</sup> this is good or bad, ~~and~~ <sup>it</sup> when you do something with your whole mind and body, then that is our way.

Dogen Zengi said, " When you say something to someone, he may not accept it, but try not to make him understand it intellectually. Do not argue with him; just listen to his objections until he himself finds something wrong with them. " This is very interesting. Try not to force your idea on someone, but rather think about it with him. If you feel you have won the discussion, that also is the wrong attitude. Try not to win in the argument; just listen to it; But it is also wrong to behave as if you had lost. Usually when we say something, we are apt to try to sell our teaching or force our idea. But between zen students there is no special purpose in speaking or in listening. Sometimes we listen, sometimes we talk; that's all. Like a greeting: ' Good morning ! ' or just as you eat your food at meal time. Through this kind of communication we can develop our way.

Not to say anything may be very good, but there's no reason why we should be always silent. Whatever you do, ~~or~~ even including non-doing, that is our practice. That is an expression of the big mind. So the big mind is something to express, but is not something to figure out. Big mind is something which you have, but is not something to seek for. Big mind is something to talk about, or to express by our activity, or something to enjoy. If so, in our way of observing precepts there's no Hinayana way or Mahayana way. Hinayana way is Hinayana only because of a gaining idea. Only because you seek to gain something through rigid formal practice does it become a problem for you. But if we appreciate the problem we have itself as

an expression of big mind, it is not a problem any more.

Sometimes our problem is that big mind is very complicated;

sometimes it is too simple to figure out what it is.

That is also big mind. But because you try to figure

out what it is, because you want to simplify the complicated

big mind, that is a problem for you. So whether you have

a problem in your life or not depends upon your own attitude,

your ~~understanding~~ own understanding. Because of the

double nature or paradoxical nature of the truth, there

should be no problem of understanding if you have the

big Mahayana mind. This kind of mind will be obtained

by your true zazen.

~~Life and Death~~  
HIRUANA

" Our life and death are the same thing. When we realize this fact, we have no fear of death anymore, nor actual difficulty in our life. "

If you go to Japan and visit Eihei-ji monastery, just before you enter you will see a small bridge called 'Hanshaku-Kyo'. 'Hanshaku-Kyo' means Half Dipper Bridge. Whenever Dogen Zengi dipped water from the river he used only half the dipper, returning the rest to the river again, without throwing it away. That is why we call that bridge, 'Hanshaku-Kyo', Half Dipper Bridge. At Eihei-ji when we wash our face, we fill the basin just seventy percent of its capacity. And after we wash we empty the water towards rather than away from our body. This means to have respect for the water. This kind of practice is not based on any ideas of being economical. It may be difficult to understand why Dogen returned half of the water he dipped to the river. This kind of practice is beyond our thinking. When we feel the beauty of the river, when we are one with the water, we intuitively do it in Dogen's way. It is our true nature to do so. But if your true nature is covered by ideas of economy or efficiency, Dogen's way doesn't make any sense.

The other day I went to Yosemite National Park, and I saw some huge waterfalls. The highest one there is 1,340 feet high and from it the water comes down like a curtain thrown from the top of the mountain. It does

not come down swiftly, as you might expect; it comes down very slowly because of the distance. And the water does not come down as one stream, but is separated into many tiny streams. From a distance it looks like a curtain. And I thought it must be a very difficult experience for each drop of water to come down from the top of such a high mountain. It takes time, you know, a long time for the water finally to reach the bottom of the waterfall. And it seems to me that our human life may be like this. We have many difficult experiences in our life. But at the same time, I thought, the water was not originally separated, but was one whole river. Only when it is separated, does it have some difficulty in falling. It is as if the water does not have any feeling when it is one whole river. <sup>but</sup> Only when separated into many drops can it begin to have or to express some feeling. When we see <sup>the</sup> one whole river we do not feel the living activity of the water, but when we dip a part of the water into a dipper, we experience some feeling of the water, and we also feel the value of the person who uses the water. Feeling ourselves and the water in this way, we cannot use it in just a material way. It is a living thing.

Before we were born we had no feeling; we were one with the universe. This is called mind-only, or essence of mind, or big mind. After we are separated by birth from this oneness, like the water falling from the waterfall is separated by the wind and rocks, then we have feeling. You have difficulty because you have feeling. You attach

to the feeling you have without knowing just how this kind of feeling is created. When you do not realize that you are one with the river, or one with the universe, you have fear. Whether it is separated into drops or not, water is water. Our life and death are the same thing. When we realize this fact we have no fear of death anymore, and we have no actual difficulty in our life.

If the water returns to its original oneness with the river, it no longer has any individual feeling to it; it resumes to its own nature, and finds composure. How very glad the water must be to come back to the original river ! If this is so, what feeling will we have when we die ? I think we are like the water in the dipper. <sup>DEATH IS LIKE WATER</sup> We will have <sup>WHEN WE RETURN TO OUR ORIGINAL</sup> composure then, perfect composure. <sup>MIND</sup> It may be too perfect for us, just now, because we are so much attached to our own feeling, to our individual existence. For us, just now, we have some fear of death, but after we resume to our true nature there is nirvana. That is why we say, " To attain nirvana is to pass away ". "To pass away" is not a very adequate expression. Perhaps "to pass on", "to go on", or "to join" would be better. Will you try to find some better expression for death ? When<sup>y</sup>ou find it, you will have quite a new interpretation to your life. It will be like my experience when I saw the water in the big waterfall. Imagine ! It was 1,340 feet high !

We say, " Everything comes out of emptiness ". One whole river, or one whole mind, is emptiness. When we reach this understanding we find the true meaning to our life. When we reach this understanding we can see the

beauty of the human life. Before we realize this fact, everything that we see is just delusion. Sometimes we overestimate the beauty; sometimes we underestimate or ignore the beauty because our small mind is not in accord with reality.

To talk about it this way is quite easy, but to have the actual feeling is not so easy. But by <sup>your</sup> practice of zazen, you can cultivate this feeling. When you can sit with your whole body and mind, and with the oneness of your mind and body under the control of the universal mind, you can easily attain this kind of right understanding.

<sup>then</sup> Your everyday life will be renewed without being attached to the old erroneous interpretation of life. When you realize this fact, you will discover how meaningless your old interpretation was, and how many <sup>MUCH WASTED</sup> useless efforts you <sup>MADE</sup> had been making. <sup>BY YOUR PRACTICE OF ZAZEN</sup> You will find the true meaning of life, and even though you have difficulty falling upright from the top of the waterfall to the bottom of the mountain, you will enjoy your life.



PART III

RIGHT UNDERSTANDING

" Our understanding of Buddhism is not just an intellectual understanding. <sup>True understanding</sup> ~~At the same time it is the practice~~ ~~itself.~~ "

# The Traditional Spirit of Zen

" If you are trying to gain enlightenment, you are driven by karma, and you are wasting your time on your black cushion. "

The most important things in our practice are our physical posture and our way of breathing. We are not so concerned about a deep understanding of Buddhism. As a philosophy Buddhism is a very deep, wide, and firm system of thought, but zen is not concerned about philosophical understanding. We emphasize practice. We should understand why our physical posture and breathing exercise are so important. Instead of having a deep understanding of the teaching we need a strong confidence in our teaching that originally we have Buddha nature. Our practice is based on this faith.

Before Bodhidharma came to China almost all the famous stock words in zen were in use. For instance there was the term, 'sudden enlightenment'. 'Sudden enlightenment' is not an adequate translation, but tentatively I will use the expression. Enlightenment comes all of a sudden to us. That is true enlightenment. Before Bodhidharma, people thought that after a long preparation, sudden enlightenment would come. Thus zen practice was a kind of training to gain enlightenment. Actually many people today are practicing zazen with this idea. But this is not the traditional understanding of zen. The understanding passed down from Buddha to our time, is that when you start zazen, there is enlightenment, even without any preparation. Whether you practice zazen or not, you have

Buddha nature. Because you have it, there is enlightenment in your practice. The point we emphasize is not the stage we attain, but the strong confidence we have in our original nature, and the sincerity of our practice. We should practice zen with the same sincerity as Buddha. If originally we have Buddha nature, the reason we practice zazen is that we must behave like Buddha. To transmit our way is to transmit our spirit from Buddha. So we have to harmonize our spirit, our physical posture, and our activity with the traditional way. You may attain some stage, of course, but the spirit of your practice should not be based on an egoistic idea.

According to the traditional Buddhist understanding, our human nature is without ego. When we have no idea of ego, we have Buddha's view of life. Our egoistic ideas are delusion, covering our Buddha nature. We are always creating and following them; repeating this process over and over again, our life becomes completely occupied by ego-centered ideas. This is called karmic life, or karma. The Buddhist life should not be karmic life. The purpose of our practice is to cut off the karmic spinning mind. If you are trying to attain enlightenment, that is a part of your karma. You create karma; you are driven by karma, and you are wasting your time on your black cushion. According to Bodhidharma's understanding, practice based on any gaining idea is just a repetition of your karma. Forgetting this point, many later zen masters emphasized some stage to be attained by practice.

More important than any stage which you will attain is your sincerity, or right effort. Right effort must be based on a true understanding of our traditional practice. When you understand this point you will understand how important it is to keep your posture right. When you do not understand this point, the posture and the way of breathing are just a means to attain enlightenment. If this is so, it would be much better to take some drugs instead of sitting in the cross-legged position ! If our practice is only a means to attain enlightenment, there is actually no way to attain it ! We lose the meaning of the way to the goal. But when we believe in our way firmly, we have already attained enlightenment. When you believe in your way enlightenment is there. But when you can't believe in the meaning of the practice which you are doing in this moment, you cannot do anything. You are just wandering around the goal, with your monkey mind. You are always looking for something, without knowing what you are doing. If you want to see something, you should open your eyes. When you do not understand Bodhidharma's zen, you are trying to look at something with your eyes closed. We do not slight the idea of attaining enlightenment, but the most important thing is this moment, not some day. We have to make our effort in this moment. This is the most important thing for our practice.

Before Bodhidharma the study of Buddha's teaching resulted in a deep and lofty philosophy of Buddhism, and people tried to attain its high ideals. This was a mistake. Bodhidharma discovered that it was a mistake to

create some lofty or deep idea, and then try to attain it by the practice of zazen. If that is our zazen, it is nothing different from our usual activity, or monkey mind. It looks like a very good, a very lofty and holy activity, but actually there is no difference between it and our monkey mind. That is the point that Bodhidharma emphasized.

Before Buddha attained enlightenment he made all possible efforts for us, and at last he attained a thorough understanding of the various ways. You may think Buddha attained some stage where he was free from karmic life, but it is not so. Many stories were told by Buddha about his experiences after he attained enlightenment. He was not at all different from us. When his mother-country was at war with a powerful neighboring country, he told his disciples of his own karma, of how he suffered when he saw that his mother-country was going to be conquered by the neighboring king. If he had been someone who had attained an enlightenment in which there was no karma there would be no reason for him to suffer so. And even after he attained enlightenment he continued the same effort we are making. But his view of life was not shaky. His view of life was stable, and he watched everyone's life, including his own life. He watched himself, and he watched others with the same eyes that he watched stones or plants, or anything else. He had a very scientific understanding. That was his way of life after he attained enlightenment.

When we have the traditional spirit to follow the truth as it goes, and practice our way without any egoistic idea, then we will attain enlightenment in its true

sense. And when we understand this point we will make our best effort in each moment. That is true understanding of Buddhism. So our understanding of Buddhism is not just an intellectual understanding. Our understanding, at the same time, is its own expression, is the practice itself. Not by reading or contemplation of philosophy, but only through practice, actual practice, can we understand what Buddhism is. Constantly we should practice zazen, with strong confidence in our true nature, ~~breaking~~ breaking the chain of karmic activity and finding our place in the world of actual practice.

everything  
changes

# Transiency

" The basic teaching of how to live in this world is to accept the truth of transiency and find pleasure in suffering. "

The basic teaching of Buddhism is the teaching of transiency, or change. That everything changes <sup>is</sup> if the basic truth for each existence; no one can deny this truth, and all the teaching of Buddhism is condensed within it. This is the teaching for all of us, and wherever we go this teaching is true. This teaching is also interpreted as the teaching of selflessness. Because each existence is in constant change there is no abiding self; in fact, the self-nature of each existence is nothing but to change itself, which is the self-nature of all existence. There is no special separate self-nature for each existence. And this teaching is also called the teaching of nirvana. When we realize the everlasting truth of 'everything changes' and find our composure in it, we find ourselves in nirvana.

With<sup>out</sup> accepting the fact that everything changes, we cannot find perfect composure. But unfortunately, although it is true, it is difficult for us to accept it. Because we cannot accept the truth of transiency, we suffer. So the cause of suffering is our non-acceptance of this truth. The teaching of the cause of our suffering, and the teaching that everything changes are thus two sides of one coin. Subjectively, from our human standpoint, the teaching of transiency is the cause of

our suffering. But objectively this teaching is simply the basic truth that everything changes. Dogen Zengi said, " Teaching which does not sound like it is forcing something on you is not true teaching ". The teaching itself is true, and in itself does not force anything upon you, but because of our human tendency we accept the teaching as if the teacher were forcing something on us. But whether we feel good or bad about it, this truth exists. If nothing exists, this truth does not exist. Buddhism exists because of each particular existence.

We should find the perfect existence through the imperfect existence. We should find perfection in imperfection. For us, complete perfection is not different from imperfection. The eternal exists because of non-eternal existence. In Buddhism it is a heretical view to expect something outside this world. We do not seek for something besides ourselves. We should find the truth in this world, through our difficulties, through our suffering. This is the basic teaching of Buddhism. Pleasure is not different from difficulty. Good is not different from bad. Bad is good; good is bad. They are two sides of one coin. So enlightenment should be in practice. That is the right understanding of practice, and the right understanding of our life. So to find pleasure in suffering is the only way to accept the truth of transiency. Without realizing how to accept this truth you cannot live in this world. Even though you try to escape



from it your effort will be in vain. If you think there is some other way to accept the eternal truth that everything changes, that is your delusion. This is the basic teaching of how to live in this world. Whatever you may feel about it, you have to accept it; you have to make this kind of effort.

So until we become strong enough to accept difficulty as pleasure we have to continue this effort. Actually, if you become honest enough, or straightforward enough, it is not so difficult to accept this truth. You can change your way of thinking a little bit. It is difficult, but this difficulty will not always be the same. Sometimes it will be difficult, and sometimes it will not be so difficult. If you are suffering you will have some pleasure in the teaching that everything changes. When you are in trouble, it is quite easy to accept the teaching. So why don't you accept it at other times? It is the same thing. Sometimes you may laugh at yourself, discovering how selfish you are. But no matter how you feel about this teaching, it is very important for you to change your way of thinking and accept the truth of transiency.

## The Quality of Being

" When you do something, if you fix your mind on the activity with some confidence, the quality of your state of mind is the activity itself. When you are concentrated on the quality of your being, you are prepared for the activity. "

The purpose of zazen is to attain the freedom of our being, physically and mentally. According to Dogen Zengi, every existence is a flashing into the vast phenomenal world, and each existence is another expression of the quality of being itself. I saw many stars when I was in the car this morning. The stars I saw were nothing but the light which had traveled at great speed many miles from the heavenly bodies. But for me the stars are not speedy beings, but calm, steady, and peaceful beings. We say, " In calmness there should be activity; in activity there should be calmness. " Actually, they are the same thing; to say 'calmness' and to say 'activity' is just to express two different interpretations of one fact. There is harmony in our activity, and where there is harmony there is calmness. This harmony makes the quality of the being, but the quality of the being is nothing but its speedy activity. Because there is some harmony in the speedy activity we can feel its quality.

When we sit we feel very calm and serene, but actually we do not know what kind of activity is going on inside our being. Because there is complete harmony in our systematic physical activity we feel the calmness in it. Even if we don't feel it, the quality is there.

So for us there is no need to be bothered by calmness or activity, stillness or movement. When you do something, if you fix your mind on the activity with some confidence, the quality of your state of mind is the activity itself. When you are concentrated on the quality of your being, you are prepared for the activity. Movement is nothing but the quality of our being. And when we sit the quality of our calm, steady serene sitting is the quality of the immense activity of being itself.

'Everything is just a flashing into the vast, phenomenal world' means the freedom of our activity, or of our being. If you sit in the right manner, with the right understanding, you attain the freedom of your being, even though you are just a temporal existence. Within this moment, this temporal existence does not change, does not move, and is always independent from other existences. In the next moment another existence arises; we may change to something else. Strictly speaking, there is no connection between I-myself yesterday and I-myself in this moment; there is no connection whatsoever. Dogen Zengi said, "Charcoal does not become ashes." Ashes are ashes; they do not belong to charcoal. They have their own past and future. They are an independent existence because they are a flashing into the vast phenomenal world. And charcoal and red hot fire are quite different existences. Black charcoal is also a flashing into the vast phenomenal world. Where there is black charcoal there is no red hot charcoal. So black charcoal is independent from red hot charcoal; ashes are independent from

firewood; each existence is independent of every other.

Today I am sitting in Los Altos. Tomorrow morning I shall be in San Francisco. There is no connection between the 'I' in Los Altos, and the 'I' in San Francisco. They are quite different beings. Here we have the freedom of existence. And there is no quality connecting you and me; when I say 'you', there is no 'I'; when I say 'I', there is no 'you'. You are independent, and I am independent; each exists in a different moment. But this does not mean we are quite different beings. We are actually one and the same being. We are the same, and yet different. It is very paradoxical, but actually it is so. Because we are independent beings, each one of us is a complete flashing into the vast phenomenal world. When I am sitting, there is no other person, but this does not mean I ignore you. I am completely one with every existence in the phenomenal world. So when I sit, you sit; everything sits with me. That is our zazen. When you sit, everything sits with you. And everything makes up the quality of your being. I am a part of you. I go into the quality of your being. So in this practice we have absolute liberation from everything else. If you understand this secret there is no difference between zen practice and your everyday life. You can interpret everything as you wish.

A wonderful painting is the result of the feeling in your fingers. If you have the feeling of the thinness of the ink in your brush, the painting is already there, before you paint. When you dip your brush into the ink you already know the result of your drawing, or else you

cannot paint. So before you do something the being is there, the result is there. Even though you look as if you were sitting quietly, all your activity past and present, is included; and the result of your sitting is also already there. You are not reacting at all. All the activity is included within you. That is your being. So all the results of your practice are included in your sitting. This is our practice, our zazen.

Dogen Zengi became interested in Buddhism as a boy when he saw the smoke from an incense stick, burning by his dead mother's body, and he felt the evanescence of our life. This feeling of the evanescence of life grew within him and finally resulted in his attainment of enlightenment and the development of his deep philosophy. When he saw the smoke from the incense stick, he felt the evanescence of life and he felt very lonely. But that lonely feeling became stronger and stronger, and flowered into enlightenment when he was twenty-eight years old. And at the moment of enlightenment he exclaimed, "There is no body and no mind!" When he said "no body and no mind," all his being in that moment became a flashing into the vast phenomenal world, a flashing ~~which~~ including everything, ~~which~~ covering everything, and ~~which~~ <sup>with</sup> had immense quality in it. Even though it is just a flashing, all the phenomenal world is included within it. It is an absolute independent existence. That was his enlightenment. So, starting from the lonely feeling of the evanescence of life, he attained the most powerful experience of the

quality of his being. And he said, " I have dropped off my mind and body. " Because you think you have body or mind, you have lonely feelings, but when you realize that everything is just a flashing into the vast universe you become very strong, and your existence becomes very meaningful. This was Dogen's enlightenment, and this is our practice.

## Naturalness

*and every*

" Moment after moment, everyone comes out from nothingness. This is true naturalness. This is the true joy of life. "

There is a big misunderstanding about the idea of naturalness. Most people who come to us believe in some freedom or naturalness, but their understanding is what we call 'ji neng ken getto' or heretical naturalness. 'Ji neng ken getto' means that there is no need to be formal -- just a kind of 'let-alone-policy' or sloppiness. That is naturalness for most people. But that is not the naturalness we mean. It is rather difficult to explain, but naturalness is, I think, some feeling of being independent from everything, ~~That is naturalness.~~ Or some activity which is based on nothingness. Something which comes out of nothingness is naturalness, like a seed or plant coming out from the ground. The seed has no idea of being some particular plant, but it has its own form and is in perfect harmony with the ground, with its surroundings. And as it grows, in the course of time, it expresses its nature. ~~So~~ Nothing exists without form or color. Whatever it is, it has some form and color, and that form and color is in perfect harmony with other beings. And there is no trouble. That is what we mean by naturalness.

For a plant or stone to be natural is no problem. But for us there is some problem, indeed a big problem. To be natural is something which we must work on.

When what you do just comes out from nothingness, you have quite a new feeling. For instance, when you are quite hungry, to take some food is naturalness. You feel natural. But when you are expecting too much, to have some food is not natural. You have no new feeling. You have no appreciation for it.

The true practice of zazen is to sit as if drinking water when you are thirsty. There <sup>YOU</sup> ~~HE~~ have naturalness. It is quite natural for ~~HE~~ <sup>YOU</sup> to take a nap when ~~HE~~ <sup>YOU</sup> are very very sleepy. But to take a nap just because you are lazy, as if it were the privilege for a human being to take a nap, is not naturalness. You think, "My friends, all of them, are napping; why shouldn't I? When everyone else is not working, why should I work so hard? When they have a lot of money, why don't I?" This is not naturalness. Our mind is entangled with some other idea. When you are bound by some other's idea, ~~that~~ ~~is~~ ~~not~~ ~~natural~~ ~~ness~~ you are not independent; you are not yourself; and you are not natural. Even if you sit in the cross-legged position, if your zazen is not natural it is not true practice. You do not have to force yourself to drink water when you are thirsty; you are glad to drink water. If you have true joy in your zazen, that is true zazen. But even though you have to force yourself to practice zazen, if you feel something good in your practice, that is zazen. Actually it is not a matter of forcing something on you or not. Even though you have some difficulty, when you want to have it, that is naturalness.



This naturalness is very difficult to explain. But if you can just sit and experience nothingness in your practice, there is no need to explain. If it comes out of nothingness, whatever you do is natural, and that is true activity. You have the true joy of practice, the true joy of life in it. <sup>and every moment</sup> Everyone comes out from nothingness moment after moment, comes out from nothingness. So moment after moment we have true joy of life. So we say 'shin ku myo mu': from true emptiness, the wonderful being appears. 'Shin' is true, 'ku' is emptiness, 'myo' is wonderful, 'mu' is being: from true emptiness, wonderful being.

So without nothingness, there is no naturalness -- no true being. True being comes out from nothingness, moment after moment. Nothingness is always there, and from it everything appears. But usually forgetting all about nothingness, you always behave as if you have something. What you do is based on some possessive idea or some concrete idea, and that is not natural. For instance, when you listen to a lecture, you should not have any idea of yourself. You should not have your own idea when you listen to someone. You have to forget everything you have in your mind and just listen to what he says. To have nothing in your mind, to listen with empty mind, is naturalness. Then you will understand what he says. But if you have some idea to compare with what he says, you will not hear everything; your understanding will be one-sided; that is not naturalness. When you do something, you should be completely involved in it. You should devote yourself

completely. Then you have nothing. So if there is no true emptiness in your activity, that is not natural.

Most people insist on some idea. Recently the young generation talks about love. Love ! Love ! Love ! Their minds are full of love ! And when they study zen, if what I say <sup>is</sup> <sup>not</sup> does not accord with the idea of love they have, they will not accept it. They are quite stubborn-headed, you know. You may be amazed ! Of course not all of them, but some of them have a very very hard attitude. That is not naturalness at all. Even though they talk about love, and freedom or naturalness, they do not understand it. And they cannot understand what zen is in that way. If you want to study zen you should forget all your previous ideas and just practice zazen and see what kind of experience you have in your practice. That is naturalness.

Whatever you do this attitude is necessary. Sometimes we say 'nyu nan shin', or soft mind. 'Nyu' is soft feeling; 'nan' is something which is not hard; 'shin' is mind. ~~んん~~ 'Nyu nan shin' means a smooth, natural mind. When you have that mind you have the joy of life. When you lose it, you lose everything. You have nothing. Although you think you have something, or because you think you have something, you have nothing. But when ~~all~~ <sup>all</sup> you do comes out of your nothingness, then you have everything. Do you understand ? That is what we mean by naturalness.

# Emptiness (I)

" When you study Buddhism you should have a general house-cleaning of your mind. "

If you want to understand Buddhism it is necessary for you to forget all about your preconceived ideas. To begin with you must give up the idea of substantiality or existence. The usual view of life is firmly rooted in the idea of existence. For most people everything exists; whatever they see and whatever they hear, they think exists. Of course the bird we see and hear exists. It exists, but what I mean by that may not be exactly what you mean. The Buddhist understanding of life includes both existence and non-existence . The bird both exists and does not exist/ at the same time. We say that a view of life based on existence alone is heretical. If you take things too seriously, as if they existed substantially or permanently, you are called a heretic. Most people may be heretics.

We say true existence comes from emptiness and goes back again into emptiness. Something which appears from emptiness is true existence. We have to go through the gate of emptiness. This idea of existence is very difficult to explain. Many people these days have begun to feel, at least intellectually, the emptiness of the modern world, or the self-contradiction of their culture. In the past, for instance, the Japanese people had a firm confidence in the permanent existence of their culture and

their traditional way of life, but since they lost the war, they have become very skeptical. Some people think this skeptical attitude is awful, but actually it is better than their old attitude. As long as we have some definite idea about <sup>or</sup> some hope in~~x~~ the future we cannot really be serious with the moment that exists right now. You may say, " I can do it tomotrow, or next year ", believing that something that exists today will exist tomorrow. Even though you are not trying so hard, you expect that some promising thing will come, as long as you follow a certain way. But there is no certain way that exists permanently. There is no way set up for us. Moment after moment we have to find our own way. Some idea of perfection, or some perfect way which is set up by someone else, is not the true way for us. Each one of us must make his own true way, and when we do, that way will express the universal way. This is the mystery. When you understand one thing through and through, you understand everything. When you try to understand everything, you will not understand anything. The best way is to understand yourself and then you will understand everything. So when you try hard to make your own way, you will help others, and you will be helped by others. Before you make your own way you cannot help anyone, and no one can help you. To be independent in this true sense we have to forget everything which we have in our mind, and discover something quite new and different moment after moment. This is how we live in this world.

So we say true understanding will come out of emptiness.

So when you study Buddhism you should have a general house-cleaning of your mind. You must take everything out of your room and clean it thoroughly. If it is necessary you may bring everything back in again. You may want many things, so one by one you can bring them back. But if they are not necessary there is no need to keep them.

We see the flying bird. Sometimes we see the trace of it. Actually you cannot see the trace of a flying bird, but sometimes we feel as if we could. This is also good. If it is necessary you should bring back in the things you took from your room.. But before you put something in your room it is necessary for you to take out something. If you don't, your room will become crowded with old, useless junk.

We say, " Step by step I stop the sound of the murmuring brook ". When you work along the brook you will hear the water running. The sound is continuous, but you must be able to stop it if you want to stop it. This is freedom; this is renunciation. One after another you will have various thoughts in your mind, but if you want to stop your thinking you can. So when you are able to stop the sound of the murmuring brook, you will appreciate the feeling of your work. But as long as you have some fixed idea, or you are caught by some habitual way of doing things, you cannot appreciate things in their true sense.

If you seek for freedom, you cannot find. Absolute

freedom itself is necessary, before you can acquire absolute freedom. That is our practice. Our way is not always heading in one direction. Sometimes we go east; sometimes we go west. To go one mile to the west means to go back one mile to the east. Usually if you go one mile to the east it is opposite to going one mile to the west. But if it is possible to go one mile to the east that means it is possible to go one mile to the west. This is freedom. Without this freedom you cannot be concentrated on what you do. You may think you are concentrated on something, but before you obtain this freedom, you will have some uneasiness in what you are doing, because you are bound by some idea of going east or west, so your activity is in dichotomy or duality. As long as you are caught by duality you cannot attain absolute freedom, and you cannot concentrate. Concentration is not to try hard to watch something. In zazen if you try to look at one spot you will be tired in about five minutes. This is not concentration. Concentration means freedom. So your effort should be directed at nothing. You should be concentrated on nothing. In zazen practice we say your mind should be concentrated on your breathing, but the way to keep your mind on your breathing is to forget all about yourself and just to sit and feel your breathing. If you are concentrated on your breathing you will forget yourself, and if you forget yourself you will be concentrated on your breathing. I don't know which is first. So actually there is no need to try too hard to be concentrated on your breathing. Just do as much as you can.



# Emptiness (II)

" It is the readiness of mind that is wisdom."

In the Prajna Paramita Sutra the most important point is, of course, the idea of emptiness. Before we understand the idea of emptiness everything seems to exist substantially. But after we realize the emptiness of things everything becomes real -- not substantial.

When we realize that everything we see is a part of emptiness, then we have no attachment to any existence; we realize that everything is just a tentative form or color. When we realize this truth we realize the true meaning of each tentative existence. When we first hear that everything is a tentative existence most of us will be disappointed; but this disappointment comes from a wrong view of man and nature. It is because our way of observing things is deeply rooted in our self-centered ideas that we are disappointed when we hear that everything has only tentative existence. But when we actually realize this truth, we will have no suffering.

This sutra says, " Bodhisattva Avaleskitesvara observes that everything is emptiness, thus he forsakes all suffering ". It is not after he realized this truth that he overcame suffering. To realize this fact is itself to be relieved from suffering. So realization of the truth is salvation itself. We say, 'to realize', but the realization of the truth is always near at hand; it is not after we practice zazen that we realize the truth;



even before we practice zazen realization is there. It is not after we understand the truth that we attain enlightenment. To realize the truth is to live -- to exist here, right now. So it is not a matter of understanding or of practice. It is an ultimate fact. In this sutra Buddha is referring to the ultimate fact that we always face moment after moment. This point is very important. This is Bodhidharma's zazen. Even before we practice it, enlightenment is there. But usually the practice of zazen and enlightenment are two different things. Here is practice ( holding up his glasses ), and when we use the practice ( putting on his glasses ) we see enlightenment. This is the wrong understanding. The glasses themselves are enlightenment, and to put them on is also enlightenment. So whatever you do, or even though you do not do anything, enlightenment is there, always. This is Bodhidharma's understanding of enlightenment.

You cannot practice true zazen because you practice it; if you don't, there is enlightenment, and there is true practice. When you do it, you create some concrete idea of 'you' or 'I', and you create some particular idea of practice or zazen. So here you are ( pointing to the right side ), and here is zazen ( pointing to the left side ). So zazen and you become two different things. If the combination of practice and you is zazen, it is the zazen of a frog. For a frog, this is zazen ( sitting in zazen posture). When a frog is hopping, that is not zazen. This kind of misunderstanding will vanish if you really

understand emptiness. Emptiness means everything is always here. One whole being is not an accumulation of everything. It is impossible to divide one whole existence into parts. It is always here and always working. This is enlightenment. So there actually is no particular practice. In the sutra it says, "There are no eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, nor body or mind.." and so on. This 'no mind' is true mind which includes everything.

The important thing in our understanding is to have a smooth, free-thinking way of observation. We have to think and to observe things without stagnation. We should accept things as they are without difficulty. Our mind should be soft enough to understand things as they are. When our thinking is soft, it is called imperturbable thinking. This kind of thinking is always stable. This kind of thinking is called mindfulness. Thinking which is divided in many ways is not true thinking. Concentration should be present in our thinking. This is mindfulness. Whether you have an object or not your mind should be stable and your mind should not be divided. This is zazen.

It is not necessary to make an effort to think in a particular way. Your thinking should not be one-sided. We just think with our whole mind, and see things as they are, without any effort. Just to see, and to <sup>be</sup> ready to see things with our whole mind is zazen practice. If we are prepared for thinking, there is no need to make an effort to think. This is called mindfulness. Mindfulness is, at the same time, wisdom. By wisdom we do not mean some particular faculty, or some particular philosophy. It is the readiness of the mind that is wisdom.

So wisdom could be various philosophies and teachings, or various kinds of research or studies. But we should not become attached to some particular wisdom, such as that which was taught by Buddha. Wisdom is not something to learn. Wisdom is something which will come out of your mindfulness. So the point is to be ready for observing things, and to be ready for thinking. This is called emptiness of your mind. Emptiness is nothing but the practice of zazen.

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## Believing in Nothing

" In our everyday life our thinking is ninety-nine percent self-centered. Why do I have suffering ? Why do I have trouble ? "

I discovered that it is necessary, absolutely necessary to believe in nothing. That is, we have to believe in something which has no form, or no color, something which exists before all forms and colors appear. This is a very important point. No matter what god or doctrine you believe in, if you become attached to it, your belief will be based, more or less on a self-centered idea. You strive for a perfect faith in order to save yourself. But it will take time to attain such a perfect faith. You will be involved in an idealistic practice. In constantly seeking to actualize your ideal, you will have no time for composure. But if we are always prepared for accepting everything we see as something appearing from nothing, knowing that there is some reason why and color a phenomenal existence of such and such form appears, then at that moment we will have perfect composure.

When you have a headache, there is some reason why you have a headache. If you know why you have a headache, you will feel better. But if you don't know why, you may say, " Oh, I have a terrible headache ! Maybe it is because of my bad practice. If my meditation or zen practice were better I wouldn't have this kind of trouble " ! If you understand conditions in this way you will not have perfect faith in yourself, or in your practice

until you attain perfection. You will be so busy trying that I'm afraid you will have no time to attain perfect practice, so you may have to keep your headache all the time ! This is a rather silly kind of practice. This kind of practice will not work. But if you believe in something which exists before you had the headache, and if you know the reason why you had the headache, then you will feel better, naturally. To have a headache will be all right, because you are healthy enough to have a headache. If you have a stomach ache, your stomach is healthy enough to have pain. But if your stomach becomes accustomed to its poor condition, you will have no pain. That's awful ! You will be coming to the end of your life from your stomach trouble.

So it is absolutely necessary for everyone to believe in nothing! But I don't mean voidness. There is something, but that something is something which is always prepared for taking some particular form, and it has some rules, or theory, or truth in its activity. This is called Buddha nature, or Buddha himself. When we personify this existence we call it Buddha; when we understand it as the ultimate truth we call it Dharma; and when we accept the truth and act as a part of the Buddha, or according to the theory, we call ourselves Sangha. But even though there are three Buddha forms, it is one existence which has no form or color, and it is always ready for taking form and color. This is not just theory. This is not just the teaching of Buddhism. This is the absolutely necessary understanding of our life. Without this under-

standing our religion will not help us. We will be bound by our religion, and we will have more trouble because of it. If you become the victim of Buddhism, I may be very happy, but you will not be so happy. So this kind of understanding is very, very important.

While we were practicing zazen this morning we heard the rain dropping from the roof in the dark. I think soon we will see the wonderful mist coming through the big trees, and later when the people start to work, we will see the beautiful mountains. But some people will be annoyed if they hear the rain when they are lying in their beds in the morning, not knowing that later they will see the beautiful sun rising from the east. If our mind is concentrated on ourselves we will have this kind of worry. But if we accept ourselves as the embodiment of the truth or Buddha nature, we will have no worry. We will think, "Now it is raining, but we don't know what will happen in the next moment. By the time we go out it may be a beautiful day, or a stormy day. Since we don't know, let's appreciate the sound of the rain now." This kind of attitude is the right attitude. If you understand yourself as a temporal embodiment of the truth, you will have no difficulty whatsoever. You will appreciate your surroundings, and you will appreciate yourself as a wonderful part of Buddha's great activity, even in the midst of difficulties. This is our way of life.

Using the Buddhist terminology, we should begin with enlightenment, and proceed to practice, and then to thinking. Usually thinking is rather self-centered. In

our everyday life our thinking is ninety-nine percent self-centered: " Why do I have suffering, or why do I have trouble ? " This kind of thinking is ninety-nine percent of our thinking. For example, when we start to study science or read a difficult sutra, we very soon become sleepy or drowsy. But we are always wide awake and very much interested in our self-centered thinking ! But if enlightenment comes first, before thinking, before practice, your thinking and your practice will not be self-centered. By enlightenment I mean to believe in nothing, or to believe in something which has no form or no color, and is ready to take form or color. <sup>This</sup> Enlightenment is the immutable truth. And it is on this original truth that our activity, our thinking and our practice should be based.

## Non-Duality (I)

" That we are attached to some beauty is also Buddha's activity. If you know that it is all right to attach to something. "

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Dogen Zengi said, " Even though it is midnight, dawn is here; even though dawn comes, it is nighttime<sup>t</sup>". This kind of statement conveys the understanding transmitted from Buddha to the patriarchs, and from the patriarchs to Dogen, and to us. Nighttime and daytime are not different. The same thing is sometimes called nighttime, sometimes called daytime. They are one thing.

Zazen practice and everyday activity are one thing. We call zazen everyday life; everyday life zazen. But usually we think, " Now zazen is over, and we will go about our everyday activity ". But this is not the right understanding. They are the same thing. We have nowhere to escape. So in activity there should be calmness, and in calmness there should be activity. Calmness and activity are not different.

Each existence depends on something else. Strictly speaking, there are no separate individual existences. There are just many names for one existence. Sometimes people put the stress on oneness, but this is not our understanding. We do not emphasize any point in particular, even oneness. Oneness is valuable, but variety is also wonderful. Ignoring variety, people emphasize the one absolute existence, but this is a one-sided understanding. In this understanding there is a gap between variety and



oneness. Oneness and variety are the same thing. So oneness should be appreciated in each existence. That is why we emphasize everyday life rather than some particular state of mind. We should find the reality in each moment, and on each phenomenon. This is a very important point.

Dogen Zengi said, " Although everything has Buddha nature, we love flowers, and we don't care for weeds 2. This is true of human nature. But that we are attached to some beauty is itself Buddha's activity. That we do not care for weeds is also Buddha's activity. We should know that. If you know that, it is all right to attach to something. If it is Buddha's attachment, that is non-attachment. So in love there should be hate, or non-attachment. And in hate there should be love, or acceptance. Love and hate are one thing. We should not attach to love alone. We should accept hate. We should accept weeds, despite how we feel about them. If you do not care for them, don't love them; if you love them, then love them.

Usually you criticize yourself for being unfair to your surroundings; you criticize your unaccepting attitude. But there is a very subtle difference between the usual way of accepting and our way of accepting things, although they may look exactly the same. We have been taught that there is no gap between nighttime and daytime, no gap between you and I. This means oneness. But we do not emphasize even oneness. If it is one, there is no need to emphasize the.

Dogen said, " To learn something is to know yourself; to study Buddhism is to study yourself ". That you learn something is not to acquire something which you did not know before. You know something before you learn it. There is no gap between the 'I' before you know something, and the 'I' after you know something. There is no gap between the ignorant and the wise. A foolish person is a wise person; a wise person is a foolish person. But usually we think, " He is foolish and I am wise "; or " I was foolish, and now I am wise ". How can we be wise if we are foolish ? But the understanding transmitted from Buddha to us is that there is no difference whatsoever between the foolish man and the wise man. It is so. But if I say this people may think that I am emphasizing oneness. This is not so. We do not emphasize anything. All we want to do is to know things just as they are. If we know things as they are, there is nothing to point at; there is no way to grasp anything; we cannot pick up anything. We cannot put emphasis on any point. Nevertheless, as Dogen said, " A flower falls, even though we love it, and a weed which we do not love will come up ". Even though it is so, this is our life.

In this way our life should be understood. Then there is no problem. Because we put emphasis on some particular point, we always have trouble. We should accept things just as they are. This is how we understand everything, and how we live in this world. This kind of experience is something beyond our thinking. In the thinking realm

there is a difference between oneness and variety, but in actual experience, variety and unity are the same. Because you create some idea of unity or variety, you are caught by the idea. And you have to continue the endless thinking, although actually there is no need to think.

Emotionally we have many problems, but these problems are not actual problems; they are something created; they are problems pointed out by our self-centered ideas or views. Because we point out something, there are problems. But actually it is not possible to point out anything in particular. Happiness is sorrow; sorrow is happiness. There is happiness in difficulty; difficulty in happiness. Even though the way we feel is different, they are not different, but actually the same. This is the true understanding transmitted from Buddha to us.

# Non-Duality (II)

" For zen students a weed, which for most people is worthless, is a treasure. "

A zen poem says, " After the wind stops I see a flower falling. Because of the singing bird I find the mountain calmness ". Before anything happens in the realm of calmness, we do not feel it; only when something happens within it, do we find the calmness. There is a Japanese saying, " For the moon there is the cloud. For the flower there is the wind ". When we see a part of the moon covered by a cloud, or a tree, or a weed, we feel how round the moon is. But when we see the clear moon without anything covering it, we do not feel that roundness the same way we do when we see it through something else.

When you are doing zazen, you are within the complete calmness of your mind; you do not feel anything. You just sit. But the calmness of your sitting will encourage you in your everyday life. So actually you will find the value of zen in your everyday life, rather than while you sit. But this does not mean you should neglect zazen. Even though you do not feel anything when you sit, if you do not have this zazen experience, you cannot find anything; you just find weeds, or trees, or clouds in your daily life, without the moon. That is why you are always complaining about something. But for zen students a weed which for most people is worthless is a treasure.

With this attitude whatever you do, life becomes an art.

When you practice zazen you should not try to attain anything. You should just sit in the complete calmness of your mind and not rely on anything. Just keep your body straight without leaning over or against something. To keep your body straight means not to rely on anything. In this way, physically and mentally, you will obtain complete calmness. But to rely on something or to try to do something in zazen is dualistic and not complete calmness.

In our everyday life we are usually trying to do something, trying to change something into something else, or trying to attain something. Just this trying is already in itself an expression of our true nature. The meaning lies in the effort itself. We should find out the meaning of our effort, before we attain something. So Dogen said, " We should attain enlightenment before we attain enlightenment ". It is not after attaining enlightenment that we find its true meaning. The trying to do something in itself is enlightenment. When we are in difficulty or distress, there we have enlightenment. When we are in deilement, there we should have composure. Usually we find it very difficult to live in the evanescence of life. But it is only within the evanescence of life that we can find the joy of eternal life.

By continuing your practice with this sort of understanding you can improve yourself. But if you try to attain something without this understanding you cannot work on it properly. You lose yourself in the struggle for

your goal; you achieve nothing; you just continue to suffer in your difficulties. But with right understanding you can make some progress. Then whatever you do, even though not perfect, will be based on your inmost nature, and little by little something will be achieved.

Which is more important; to attain enlightenment, or to attain enlightenment before you attain enlightenment? To make a million dollars, or to enjoy your life in your effort, little by little, even though it is impossible to make that million? To be successful, or to find some meaning in your effort to be successful? If you do not know you will not even be able to practice zazen; if you do know you will have found the true treasure of life.

Experience  
of Zen

## Experience, Not Philosophy

" There is something blasphemous in talking about how Buddhism is perfect as a philosophy or teaching without knowing what it actually is. "

Although there are many people in this country who are interested in Buddhism, few of them are interested in its pure form. Most of them are interested in studying the teaching or the philosophy of Buddhism. Comparing it to another religion, they appreciate how satisfying Buddhism is intellectually. But whether Buddhism is philosophically deep, or good, or perfect, is not the point. To keep our practice in its pure form is our purpose. Sometimes I feel there is something blasphemous when people talk about how Buddhism is perfect as a philosophy or teaching without actually knowing what it is.

To practice zazen with a group is the most important thing for Buddhism, and for us, because this practice is the original way of life. Without knowing the origin of things we cannot appreciate the result of our life's effort. Our effort must have some meaning. To find the meaning of our effort is to find the original source of our effort. We should not be concerned about the result of our effort, before we know its origin. If the origin is not clear and pure, our effort will not be pure, and its result will not satisfy us. When we return to our original nature and incessantly make our effort from this base, we will appreciate the result of our effort, moment after moment, day after day, year after year. This is how

we should appreciate our life. Those who are attached only to the result of their effort will not have any chance to appreciate it, because the result will never come. But if moment by moment, your effort arises from its pure origin, all that you do is good, and you will be satisfied with whatever you do.

Zazen practice is the practice in which we resume to our pure way of life, beyond any gaining idea, or beyond fame and profit. By practice we just keep our original nature as it is. There is no need to intellectualize about what our pure original nature is, because it is beyond our intellectual understanding. And there is no need to appreciate it, because it is beyond our appreciation. So, just to sit, without any idea of gain, and with the purest intention, to remain as quiet as our original nature, is our practice.

Here, in this zendo, there is nothing fancy. Once a week we just come and sit. After communicating with each other we go home and resume our own everyday activity, as a continuity of our pure practice, enjoying our true way of life. This is very unusual. Wherever I go people ask me, "What is Buddhism?" with their notebooks ready to write down my answer. You can imagine how I feel! But here we just practice zazen. That's all we do. And we are happy in this practice. For us there is no need to understand what zen is. We are practicing zazen. So, for us there is no need to know what zen is intellectually. This is, I think, very unusual for American society.



In America there are many patterns of life and many religions, so it may be quite natural to talk about the differences between the various religions and compare one with the other. But for us there is no need to compare Buddhism to Christianity. Buddhism is Buddhism; and Buddhism is our practice. We don't even know what we are doing when we just practice with a pure mind. So we cannot compare our way to some other religion. Some people may say ~~that zen Buddhism is a religion~~ that zen Buddhism is not religion. Maybe that is so, or maybe zen Buddhism is religion before religion. So it might not be religion in the usual sense. But it is wonderful, and even though we do not study what it is intellectually or even though we do not have any cathedral or fancy ornaments, it is possible to appreciate our original nature. This is, I think, quite unusual.

## Original Buddhism

" I want to make this point clear: Actually we are not the Soto School at all. We are just Buddhists. We are not even zen Buddhists; we are just Buddhists. If we understand this point we are truly Buddhists. "

To walk, to stand, to sit, and to lie down are the four activities, or four ways of behavior in Buddhism. Zazen is not one of the four ways of behavior, and according to Dogen Zengi, the Soto School is not one of the many schools of Buddhism. The Chinese Soto School may be one of the many schools of Buddhism, but according to Dogen his way was not one of the many schools. If this is so, you may ask why we put emphasis on the sitting posture, or why we put emphasis on having a teacher. The reason we put emphasis on the sitting posture, or zazen, is because zazen is not just one of the four ways of behavior. Zazen is the practice which contains innumerable activities; zazen started even before Buddha, and will continue to the eternal future. So this sitting posture cannot be compared to the other four activities.

Usually people put emphasis on some particular position, or on some particular understanding of Buddhism, and they think, " This is Buddhism ! " But we cannot compare our way with the practices people normally understand. Our teaching cannot be compared to other teachings of Buddhism. This is why we should have a teacher who does not attach to any particular understanding of

Buddhism. The original teaching of Buddha includes all the various schools. As a Buddhist our traditional effort should be like Buddha's: we should not attach to any particular school for doctrine. But usually, if we have no teacher, and if we take pride in our own understanding, we will lose the original characteristic of Buddha's teaching which includes all the various teachings.

Because Buddha was the founder of the teaching, people tentatively called his teaching 'Buddhism', but actually Buddhism is not some particular teaching. Buddhism is just Truth, which includes various truths in it. Zazen practice is the practice which includes the various activities of life in it. So actually we do not emphasize the sitting posture alone. How to sit is how to act. We study how to act by sitting, and this is the most basic activity for us. So that is why we practice zazen in this way. Even though we practice zazen, we should not call ourselves the zen school. We just practice zazen, taking our example from Buddha; that is why we practice. Buddha taught us how to act through our practice; that is why we sit.

To do something, or to live in each moment, means to take the temporal activity of Buddha's activity. To sit in this way is to be Buddha himself, as the historical Buddha was. The same thing applies to everything we do. Everything is Buddha's activity. So whatever you do, or even if you keep from doing something, Buddha is in that activity. Because people have no such understanding of Buddha, they think what they do is the most important

thing, without knowing who it is that is actually doing it. People think they are doing various things, but actually Buddha is doing everything. Each one of us has his own name, but those names are the many names of one Buddha. Each one of us takes many activities, but these activities are all Buddha's activities. Without knowing this people put emphasis on some activity, for instance, zazen practice. When they put emphasis on zazen, it is not true zazen. It looks as if they were sitting in the same way as Buddha, but there is a big difference in their understanding of our practice. They understand this sitting posture as just one of the four basic postures of man, and they think: "I now take this posture". But zazen is all the postures, and each posture is Buddha's posture. This understanding is the right understanding of the zazen posture. If you practice in this way, it is Buddhism. This is a very, very important point.

So Zogen did not call himself a Soto teacher, or a Soto disciple. He said, "Other people may call us the Soto School, but there is no reason for us to call ourselves Soto." You should not even use the name of Soto".

No school should consider itself a separate school. It should just be one tentative form of Buddhism. But as long as the various schools do not accept this kind of understanding, until all the schools give up calling

themselves by their particular names, we must accept the tentative name of Soto. But I want to make this point clear. Actually we are not the Soto School at all. We are just Buddhists. We are not even zen Buddhists; we are just Buddhists. If we understand this point we are truly Buddhists.

Buddha's teaching is everywhere. Today it is raining. This is Buddha's teaching. People think their own way, their own religious understanding, is Buddha's way, without knowing what they are hearing, or what they are doing, or where they are. Religion is not any particular teaching. Religion is everywhere. We have to understand our teaching in this way. We should forget all about some particular teaching; we should not ask which is good or bad. There should not be any particular teaching. Teaching is in each moment, in every existence. That is the true teaching.

## Beyond Consciousness

" To realize pure mind in your delusion is practice.. If you try to expel the delusion it will only persist the more.. Just say, " Oh, this is just delusion ", and don't be bothered by it. "

We should establish our practice where there is no practice or enlightenment. As long as we practice zazen in the area where there is practice and enlightenment, there is no chance to make perfect peace for ourselves. In other words we must firmly believe in our true nature. Our true nature is beyond our conscious experience. It is only in our conscious experience that we find practice and enlightenment or good and bad. But whether or not we have experience of our true nature, what exists there beyond consciousness, actually exists, and it is there that we have to establish the foundation of our practice.

To have even a good thing in your mind is not so good. Buddha said, " You should be like this. You ought not to be like that ". But to have what he says in your mind is not so good. It is a kind of burden for you, and you may not actually feel so good. In fact to harbor some ill will may even be better than to have some idea in your mind of what is good or of what you ought to do. To have some mischievous idea in your mind is sometimes very agreeable. That is true. Actually good and bad is not the point. Whether or not you make yourself peaceful is the point, and whether or not you stick to it.

When you have something in your consciousness you do not have perfect composure. The best way towards perfect composure is to forget everything. Then your mind is calm, and it is wide and clear enough to see and feel things as they are, without any effort. The best way to find perfect composure is not to retain any idea of things, whatever they may be -- to forget all about them and not to leave any trace or shadow of thinking. But if you try to stop your mind, or try to go beyond your conscious activity, that will only be another burden for you. " I have to stop my mind in my practice, but I cannot. My practice is not so good. " This kind of idea is also the wrong way of practice. So don't try to stop your mind but leave everything as it is. Then things will not stay in your mind so long. Things will come as they come and go as they go. Then eventually, your clear, empty mind will last fairly long.

So to have a firm conviction in the original emptiness of your mind is the most important thing in your practice. In Buddhist scriptures we sometimes use astrological analogies <sup>IN AN</sup> to attempt to describe empty mind. We calculate big mind in some astrologically great number, so great that we cannot count. This means to give up calculating. If it is so great that you cannot count then you will lose your interest and eventually give it up. This kind of description may also give rise to a kind of adoration of the innumerable number which will help you to stop the thinking of your small mind.

But it is when you sit in zazen that you will have the most pure, genuine experience of the empty state of mind. Actually emptiness of mind is not even a state of mind, but the original essence of mind which Buddha and the Sixth Patriarch experienced. Essence of mind, original mind, original face, Buddha nature, or emptiness -- all these words mean the absolute calmness of our mind.

You know how to <sup>REST</sup> take physical rest. You don't know how to <sup>REST</sup> take mental rest. Even though you lie in your bed your mind is still busy; even ~~though you sleep~~ if you sleep your mind is busy dreaming. Your mind is always in intense activity. This is not so good. We should know how to give up our thinking mind, our busy mind. In order to go beyond our thinking faculty, it is necessary to have a firm conviction in the emptiness of your mind. Believing firmly in the perfect rest of our mind, we should resume to its pure original state.

Dogen Zengi said, " You should establish your practice in your delusion ". Even though you think you are in delusion, your pure mind is there. To realize the pure mind in your delusion is practice. If you have the pure mind, the essential mind in your delusion, the delusion will vanish. It cannot stay when you say, " This is delusion ! " It will be very much ashamed. It will run away. So you should establish your practice in your delusion. To have delusion is practice. This is to attain enlightenment before you realize it. Even though you do not realize it, you have it. So when you say " This is delusion, "



that is actually enlightenment itself. If you try to expel the delusion it will only persist the more, and your mind will become busier and busier trying to cope with it. That is not so good. Just say, " Oh, this is just delusion, " and don't be bothered by it. When you just observe the delusion, you have your true mind, your calm, peaceful mind. When you start to cope with it you will be involved in delusion.

So, whether or not you attain enlightenment, just to sit in zazen is enough. When you try to attain enlightenment, then you have a big burden on your mind. Your mind will not be clear enough to see things as they are. If you truly see things as they are, then you will see things as they should be. So, on the one hand, we should attain enlightenment. That is how things should be. But on the other hand, as long as we are physical beings it is pretty hard in reality. That is how things actually are in this moment. But if we start to sit, both sides of our nature will be brought up, and we will see things both as they are, and as they should be. Even though we are not good right now, we want to be better. And when we attain the transcendental mind, we go beyond things as they are and as they should be. In the emptiness of our original mind, they are one, and there we find our perfect composure.

Usually religion develops itself in the realm of consciousness, seeking to perfect its organization,

building beautiful buildings, creating music, evolving a philosophy, and so forth. These are religious activities in the conscious world. But Buddhism emphasizes the world of unconsciousness. The best way to develop Buddhism is to sit in zazen -- just to sit, with a firm conviction in our true nature. This way is much better than to read books or study the philosophy of Buddhism. Of course it is necessary to study our philosophy; it will strengthen your conviction. Buddhist philosophy is so universal and logical. It is not just the philosophy of Buddhism, but of life itself. The purpose of Buddhist teaching is to point to life itself, existing beyond consciousness in our pure original mind. All Buddhist practices were built up to protect this true teaching, not to propagate Buddhism in some wonderful mystic way. So when we discuss religion, it should be in the most common and universal way. We should not try to propagate our way by some wonderful philosophical ~~thought~~. In some ways Buddhism is rather polemical, with some feeling of controversy in it, because the Buddhist must protect his way from mystic or magical interpretations of religion. But philosophical discussion will not be the best way to understand Buddhism. If you want to be a sincere Buddhist the best way is to sit. We are very fortunate to have a place to sit in this way. I want you to have a firm wide imperturbable conviction in your zazen of just sitting. Just to sit, that's enough.

## Buddha's Enlightenment

" If you take pride in your attainment or become discouraged because of your idealistic effort, your practice will confine you by a thick wall. "

I am very glad to be here on the day Buddha attained enlightenment under the bodhi tree. When he attained enlightenment under the bodhi tree he said, " It is wonderful to see Buddha nature in everything, and in each individual ! " What he meant was that when we practice zazen we have Buddha nature, and each of us is Buddha himself. By practice he did not mean just to sit under the bodhi tree, or to sit in the cross-legged posture. It is true that this posture is the basic one or original way for us. But actually what Buddha meant was that mountains, trees, flowing water, flowers and plants, and everything as it is, is the way Buddha is. It means everything is taking Buddha's activity, each in its own way.

But the way each thing exists is not understood by itself in its own realm of consciousness. What we see, or what we hear, is just a part, or a limited idea, of what we actually are. But when we just are -- each just existing in his own way -- we are expressing Buddha himself. In other words, when we practice something such as zazen, then there is Buddha's way or Buddha nature. When we ask what Buddha nature is, it vanishes; but when we just practice zazen like this, we have full understanding of it.

The only way to understand Buddha nature is just to practice zazen, or ~~is~~ just to be here in this way. So what Buddha meant by Buddha nature was to be there as he was, beyond the realm of consciousness.

Buddha nature is our original nature; we have it before we practice zazen, or before we acknowledge it in terms of consciousness. So <sup>in</sup> this sense whatever we do, that is Buddha's activity. If you want to understand it, you cannot understand it. When you give up trying to understand it, true understanding is there, always. Usually after zazen I talk to you, but the reason you come here is not just to listen to my talk, but to practice zazen. We should never forget this point. The reason I talk in this way is to encourage you to practice zazen in Buddha's way. So we say that although you have Buddha nature, if you are <sup>have</sup> under the idea of doing or not doing zazen, or if you do not <sup>know</sup> admit yourself to be Buddha, you understand neither Buddha nature nor zazen. But when you practice zazen in the same way as Buddha did, you will understand what our way is. We do not talk so much, but through our activity we communicate with each other, intentionally or unintentionally. We should always be alert enough to communicate with or without words. If this point is lost we will lose the most important point of Buddhism.

Wherever we go, we should not lose this way of life. That is called 'being Buddha', or 'being the boss'.

Wherever you go you should be the master of your surroundings. This means you should not lose your way. So this is called Buddha, because if you exist in this way always, you are Buddha himself. Without trying to be Buddha you are Buddha. This is how we attain enlightenment. To attain enlightenment is to be always with Buddha. By repeating the same thing over and over, we will acquire this kind of understanding. But if you lose this point and take pride in your attainment or become discouraged because of your idealistic effort, <sup>our</sup> practice will confine you by a thick wall. We should not confine ourselves by a self-built wall. So when zazen time comes, just to get up, to come here and sit with me, and talk and listen to me, and then go home again -- all these procedures are our practice. In this way, without any idea of attainment, you are always Buddha. This is true practice of zazen. Then you may understand the true meaning of Buddha's first statement, " To see Buddha nature in various beings, and in every one of us/ ".

## EPILOGUE

I am so glad to see you again. Although I have only been gone two weeks, it seems a much longer time. Saturday and Sunday I led a two-day sesshin in Northampton. On Thursday I gave lectures at Smith College. I went to New York and saw many people. At the Community Church I gave a lecture, and there were seven hundred people in the audience. I was rather amazed. I could not start my lecture because people were constantly coming in; we had to wait until all of them were seated. I laughed; they must have thought D.T. Suzuki was speaking!

I saw many people and many business men who were interested in zen. I am quite sure that we can pay for the Tassajara land, but that is not what concerns me so much. I feel a big responsibility in mangging the temple and organizing our practice in that monastery. To establish right practice in America is the most important point. Although we are paying alot of money for the land, we do not gain anything. We are not so much interested in the ownership of the land, but in practicing our way as we want to practice it. To do so, in this situation alot of money must be payed. It can't be helped.

The land itself belongs to heaven and earth. No one can possess it. Everything is in flowing change; nothing exists but momentarily in its present form and color. There is nothing to be possessed in this world

of constant change. One thing flows into another and cannot be grasped. Before the rain stops we hear the bird; even under the heavy snow we see snowdrops and some growth coming up. In the East I saw rhubarb already. In Japan, late in the spring, we eat cucumbers. In this way, everything is changing, and sometimes it is nice to feel the change of things. But if we realize what we are doing in this evanescent life, we become rather ashamed of ourselves. In this changing life, we cannot repeat the same thing again. If we miss this moment, we become older.

At Eihei-ji we have general house cleaning on <sup>each</sup> ~~the~~ third and eighth day; <sup>of the month</sup> the third, eighth, thirteenth, eighteenth, twenty-third, twenty-eighth. These days are for cleaning. After cleaning our rooms and corridors, we put on clean white tabis ( Japanese slippers ), and form a row on each side of the passage in front of the zendo. As soon as we make two perfect rows the abbot of Eihei-ji comes. He is now ninety-four years old. ~~He is now ninety-four~~ He appears with a stick, and we hear it thumping along the corridors all the way from his room. It may take more than fifteen minutes for him to come down to the zendo. He comes slowly, and we hear the sound of the stick while we are waiting. When at last he stands in front of us, this gatha ( a kind

~~\* Abbot Taisen KUMAZAWA <sup>Archbishop of Eihei-ji</sup> passed away in ~~December, 1967.~~~~

~~January 7, 1968,~~

of short poem ) is recited. It says, " Since our great sage Buddha passed away, already nearly two thousand four hundred and fifty years have gone by. If today passes, our life will become shorter. We are like fish in a small pond. In its true sense, there cannot be any worldly pleasure in life. We must study more. Our practice should be like a man with his head on fire, trying to extinguish the fire. "

That was the most impressive moment of the day for me. We cleaned our rooms very hard. This is the way we should practice zazen. When our practice is based on this kind of understanding of life, that practice is pure practice, untainted by any gaining idea.

Someone told me that <sup>soon</sup> by 1970, fifty percent of our population will be under twenty-five years of age. Fifty percent of the people under twenty-five ! I think a big change will come in our society. This is the time when we should think more about what we should do. But before we do something, or before we think something, we should reflect on our life in the most strict way. If we are not strict enough with ourselves, what we do, what we think, and what we hope will not work. We should not be too optimistic or too pessimistic. How we understand the truth that everything changes is the most important point. We should study this truth from various sides and in various ways. To study this



truth is to be

faithful to the teaching, and to be faithful to our life.

When I was coming back from the East in the plane I sat near a young boy in a Navy uniform and his mother. After talking with her boy the mother felt very sad; she didn't know what to say, so she just covered her face with a newspaper and tried to sleep. But I don't think she was sleeping. Her boy was quite a skinny boy, and his belt was too large for him. He kept tapping his hand with the end of his belt. I could not say anything. I tried to say something to him, but I had no words. This kind of thing happens all over. ~~Last night I visited a Japanese family who lost their boy in Vietnam. Yesterday I saw a girl who was talking about the Vietnam policy with endless tears in her eyes. She works in a book store, and she said many books on zen and yoga are stolen, so she was told to be careful. But she thinks that the books are taken because many people want to read something which will help them understand the great problems of life. Something should be done about the world's critical <sup>great</sup> ~~situation~~ <sup>PROBLEMS</sup> ~~situation~~. But we should avoid a hasty understanding of <sup>THESE PROBLEMS</sup> ~~the situation~~. Before we think, before we act, we should reflect more about our human life. This is the most important point, I think. And it is the first step into the study of Buddhism.~~

NOTE

THINK ALTERNATIVE REACTION

