

(From Dogen) We originally were and are Buddha nature. But the instant we attach something, we "lose" our nature. As analogy, consider the transparent nature of my eyeglasses. Attachment is like pasting images on them; in such a case they cannot function according to their true and original nature.

When we retain our transparency (and do not attach to ourselves), we are Buddhas. When we attach to something (most commonly our "selves") we are ordinary people.

When we are Buddhas, we manifest the sunshine. That is, because we are objects or obstacles to sunshine; the sunshine "is" or means something. If we did not exist, sunshine would be a meaningless concept. Still, even though it is ourselves (as "objects" or obstacles) which allows Buddha nature to be meaningful, we should not become attached to ourselves.

When we were little boys, we were all Buddhas; even when we were 16 or 17 years old we were still innocent and Buddha. But Zen can be dangerous to innocent minds. They easily tend to view Zen as something good or special by which they can gain. Such an attitude is misleading and can lead to trouble. We should not regard Zen so, because such a perspective is the same as attaching to Zen. If we attach to Zen, we go swiftly to hell even though we think we are good and innocent. Thus an innocent young person can become careless of his Buddha nature (his original innocence) and attach to his own idea of his innocence-and create more problems for himself.

We all have lost our Buddha nature because we were so careless about it. This is the human predicament, existing during Buddha's time, and existing now. When we now practice, it should be with a beginner's real innocence-devoid of ideas of good or bad or gain or loss. As long as we have beginner's mind, we have Buddhism. Our original nature being unchanged, we should believe in our innocent mind; at the same time we should beware of slipping into hell through attachment to this idea.

We should be very careful of half-baked enlightenment, especially of taking pride in our enlightenment. If we do make this error of pride, we lose our enlightenment and plunge straight to the bottom of hell.

"Those who study the Way do not understand if the Way is open or closed." (Dogen) this means that to study the Way with the idea of gaining something we need (as if we were poor beggars) means that

we don't know if the Way is open or closed. But the truth is that we are not beggars, and the Way is always wide open. To seek for something special is to ignore what we have. Zen teaches us that our pockets are full of treasure, right now and that Zen will not add anything to what we already have.

To correctly study Buddhism we should: 1) believe in Buddhism-i.e. believe that fundamentally we have not lost our way, that we are not upside-down; that we still have our treasure, etc. we should stand on this faith and practice by remaining aware of it. 2) we should beware of dualism toward our practice and ourselves, etc. (e.g. judgements of good or bad, right or innocent, etc). Dogen said: "try to cut off the function of the small mind (limited consciousness and discursive intellect). If you do this you will surely see the Way."

Dogen is very clear here. There is no reason for us not to follow his directions. But we should not practice with the idea of gaining something good. In this world there is nothing which is just good; when we have a "good," a "bad" is already there. We should just keep a beginner's mind; we should avoid being greedy and feeling that what we have (including practice) is not enough.

Patience. We should practice and live with patience. In this way we can control our lives-but "control etc", does not mean to gain or achieve something. It means to appreciate and constantly enjoy our life as it is.

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