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SINCERE PRACTICE AND WAY SEEKING MIND

by
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Sincere practice means to have sincere concern with people. So our practice is actually based on our humanity. Dogen Zenji says that to accomplish humanity to uphold Buddhism and help people. And what is the way to establish our humanity? The way to establish our humanity is tao, or practice, he says. By practice we can establish our humanity, and our practice is based on our humanity, so as a human being practicing true human nature is our zazen. And he says that the way is not something which was established by Buddha or some particular patriarch.

We must have the spirit to attribute various good things to others, and accept various evils or mistakes as our own. Within this spirit we should establish our human way. And how to establish our human way is to practice zazen. So, you may understand that zazen practice is not some special practice for some special person. This is how to establish or accomplish our human way in this actual world.

So Dogen Zenji was very strict with our human way. He doesn't ignore even a drop of water, like well made rice paper. And he is always asking us if our way is like this, and if we can accept that kind of way as our own way. And he criticizes our weakness and our darkness or carelessness in our everyday activity-the way we treat things, the way you treat your friend, the way you receive teaching from your teacher. And after all, what he will say is, "practice zazen." That is the way to polish your everyday life, and to do it without making so much effort.

The Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng Zenji, referring to this point, says that the way which was established in Buddha's time cannot be our way because that time is different from our time, people are different and society is different. So what we mean by Tao is not something already established by someone, some special person. The way is not something established already, but which must be found according to the circumstances in each moment. That is the real way. When we find our sincere practice, the realization of our true way will reveal itself. Then you will naturally find the real way. If so then to practice zazen is to establish our human way.

If we say "zazen practice," you may think this is some special practice, but actually it is not so. Because you think zazen practice is some special way, you goof off in your black cushion, making some excuse: "I am doing something good, I am trying to find some truth on a black cushion." Or, "I am following Buddha's Way." Or, you may say, as you may not know what zazen is, "But zazen is the way which Buddha established, so if we follow his way, that is zazen." But, according to Dogen Zenji that is not zazen at

all.

If you really understand zazen, you will understand that zazen is nothing but our human activity. The way everyone must go. If you understand that, you will not be involved in any idea of schools of Buddhism; Rinzai or Soto zen, Buddhism or Christianity.

When you don't have actual understanding of zazen and your way of practice, your spirit of practice is not real. It does not come from your inner voice, because you ignore the way you do things in your daily life. You think, "Zazen is important, but those things are not important, so if I practice zazen, even though I ignore my faults, it may be okay." If you practice zazen in this way, your zazen is not true zazen. That is heresy.

As you know, we respect Dharma Transmission. Although we have transmission, we have nothing to transmit, because what we should transmit is our human way--human way which is something everyone has. Everyone has the same feeling. If we drop off various superficial ways of understanding things and superficial feelings, our inmost nature is the same. There is no Japanese feeling or American feeling. It is the same, exactly the same. If you see Japanese people you will feel like an American, but if you forget all about Japanese or American way, we have no special feeling. For instance, when you practice zazen there is no American zazen or Japanese zazen. Zazen is the same. If we stop our thinking, and when we are free from our emotional activity there are no two zazens. And only when we have this kind of feeling which is not American or Japanese will we have good relationship.

Once in a while you may want to be an American, or a Japanese even. Once in a while you may feel that you want to behave like a Japanese, and you will feel good. And I feel good when I say something like you do, in slang. That makes me feel very good sometimes. But the feeling you have when I behave like a Japanese and the feeling I have when I behave like an American is the same. No difference. So if we don't stick to something, there is no Japanese or American. There is no good or bad.

That is why the Sixth patriarch say that because the times are different, people are different and society is different, there cannot be any set rules for us. The rules should be found in each moment, and how we find out is to practice zazen. When we resume our way from nothingness we will find our way according to the situation.

In this way, although the true way has been kept with perfect understanding and true practice has been preserved from Buddha to us, the true way is always mixed up with some secondary way; so called tao or way. When we say Way, you may think this way or that way, Japanese way or American way. But true way is something which you cannot substitute for something else. That is true way.

If I say so, you may think that there is only one way, although the approaches are different. But what I mean is not like that. There are those who talk about non-sectarianism, that very religion has one goal, that at the top they are all one but that the

way to it will be different, so there is no need to discriminate, because the conclusion is the same, so which every (way)_ you take you will reach the same point. But before we start zazen practice, or before we are involved in various kinds of religion, the real way is there. So to forget all about religion, including zen, and to find our way moment after moment according to the circumstances, to respect people, to respect things without ignoring anything is our way.

If you make a mistake you should faithfully make repentance. When you make a mistake if you think "everyone makes a mistake, so it is okay"--if you say so, that is not your inner voice. That you say so, already means that you have some pain in your heart. "Everyone is doing so. It is okay." If it is okay there is no need to say okay. It is not okay, so you say it is okay.

So whatever you do, if you think more, if you start from nothingness, you will see many things going on in your mind about which you will feel regretful. We should be more conscientious about what we are doing when we see it. Sometimes we do not see it. When we are not practicing zazen and our mind is mixed up with something else, we don't see. That is why we practice zazen. Even though you don't feel so good about the strictures of zazen there is a very good reason for them. But being encouraged by the strictures of human nature we will continue our practice forever, as long as we have human nature.

Human nature encourages our practice and our practice will help our full expression of human nature. So helping each other, encouraging each other, our practice will go on and on.

Buddhism was established by Buddha when he saw various creatures fighting with each other and killing each other. Our way is not to get out of this problem, but to see actually what we are doing moment after moment, from which we cannot escape. Each moment we are doing something. Already you are killing. So you cannot escape from what you are actually doing. That is why we practice zazen. And by practice we can resume our fundamental being--so call Buddha nature, where we should start our real activity. This is actually Buddha's teaching, and to have full realization of this experience is our practice.

You may say that our everyday life starts from practice and our practice will be encouraged by our everyday life. So everyday life and practice are really two sides of one coin. That is why we say that every day life is our *koan*. *Koan* in its literal sense is an official document, a public announcement because you cannot change it. That is *koan*. But a *koan* in its true sense is something which appeared from our innate human nature. You cannot substitute something else for it. Once it is issued you cannot change it. It is very strict. So with this stricture applied to yourself you should practice zazen. This is the secret of solving all the problems we have. When Dogen Zenji talked about our way, someone asked, 'You said you should be strict with yourself, and you should not be concerned about what people may say about you, whether it is a good or bad thing to do. But if you act in that way, there is a big danger for you. It may be better

to follow some rules." But he said, that is very much so, but our way, our human way cannot be so easy. Because our mind is very touchy and very subtle we do not allow for any mistakes. So it cannot be so easy. The only way for us is, if we make a mistake, then we should be regretful and make confession of it to Buddha. Without doing this, if you say "I am a follower of Buddha's Way," you are fooling yourself.

If you get many offerings following Buddha's Way, that is a kind of heresy. To receive something which you should not receive is a kind of heresy he said.

When you are pushed into such a strict, small corner of our everyday life you will find that you have to sit. This, you know, is how you arouse the way-seeking mind, and this is what he means by sincere practice.

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