

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 ^{IN AN} 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 ^{REST} take physical rest. You don't know how to ^{REST} 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.