

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 ⁱⁿ 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 ^{have} under the idea of doing or not doing zazen, or if you do not ^{know} 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, ^{our} 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/ ".