

The Secret of Control

## Control

" To give your sheep or cow a large spacious meadow is how to control him. "

To live in the realm of Buddha nature means to die as a small being, moment after moment. When we lose our balance we die, but at the same time we also develop ourselves, we grow. If we are in perfect balance we cannot live as a small being. Whatever we see is changing, losing its balance. The reason everything looks beautiful is because it is out of balance, but its background is always in perfect harmony. This is how everything exists in the realm of Buddha nature, losing its balance against a background of perfect balance. So if you see things without realizing the background of Buddha nature, everything appears to be in the form of suffering. But if you understand the background of existence, you realize that suffering itself is how we live, and how we extend our life. So in zen sometimes we emphasize the imbalance or disorder of life.

Nowadays the traditional Japanese painting has become pretty formal and lifeless. That is why we ~~have~~ <sup>has developed</sup> modern art. In the <sup>I</sup> old days, the ancient painters used to practice putting dots on paper in artistic disorder. This is rather difficult. Even though you try to do it, usually what you do is arranged in some order. You think you can control it, but you cannot! it is almost impossible to arrange your dots out of order. It is the same with taking care of your everyday life. Even though you try to put people under some control, it is impossible. You cannot do it. The

best way to control people is to encourage them to be mischievous. Then they will be in control in its wider sense. To give your sheep or cow a large, spacious meadow is how to control him. So first let people do what they want, and watch them. This is the best policy. To ignore them is not good; that is the worst policy. The second worst is trying to control them. The best one is to watch them, just to watch them, without trying to control them.

If you want to obtain perfect calmness in your zazen, you shouldn't be bothered by the various images you will find in your mind. Let them come, and let them go. Then they will be under control. But this policy is not so easy. It looks easy, but it requires some special effort. How to make this kind of effort is the secret of practice. Suppose you are sitting under some extraordinary circumstances. If you try to calm down your mind you will be unable to sit, and if you try not to be disturbed your effort will not be the right effort. The only effort that will help you is to count your breathing, or to be concentrated on your inhaling and exhaling. We say concentration, but to concentrate your mind on something is not the true purpose of zen. The true purpose of zen is to see things as they are, to observe things as they are, and to let everything go as it goes. This is to put everything under control in its widest sense. Zen practice is to open up our small mind, so concentrating is just an aid to help you realize the big mind. If you want to discover the true

meaning of zen in your everyday life, you have to understand the meaning of keeping your mind on your breathing and your body in the right posture in zazen. You should follow the rules of practice and your study should become more subtle and careful. Only in this way can you experience the vital freedom of zen.

Dogen Zenji said, " Time goes from present to past. " This is absurd, but in our practice sometimes it is true. Instead of time progressing from past to present, it goes backwards from present to past. Yoshisune was a famous samurai who lived during the Kamakura period. Because of the situation of the country at this time, he was sent to the northern part of Japan where he was killed. Before he left he bid farewell to his wife, and soon after she wrote in a poem, " Just as you unreel the thread from a spool, I want the past to become present. " When she said this, actually she made past time present. In her mind the past became alive and was the present. So as as Dogen said, " Time goes from present to past. " This is not true in our logical mind, but in the actual experience of making past time present, there we have poetry, and there we have human life.

When we experience this kind of truth, it means we have found the true meaning of time. Time constantly goes from past to present, and from present to future. This is true, but it is also true that time goes from future to present, and from present to past. A zen master once said, " To go eastward one mile is to go westward one mile. "

This is vital freedom. We should acquire this kind of perfect freedom.

But perfect freedom is not found without some rules. People, especially young people, think that freedom is to do just what they want, that in zen there is no need for rules. But it is absolutely necessary for us to have some rules. But this does not mean always to be under control. As long as you have rules, you have a chance for freedom. To try to obtain freedom without being aware of the rules means nothing. And it is to acquire this perfect freedom that we practice zazen.