

Nothing Special

" If you continue this simple practice every day, you will obtain some wonderful power. Before you attain it, it is something wonderful, but after you attain it, it is not anything special. "

I don't feel like speaking after zazen. I feel the practice of zazen is enough. But if I should say something I think what I shall talk about is how wonderful it is to practice zazen in this way. Our purpose is just to keep this practice forever. This practice started from beginningless time, and it will continue into an endless future. Strictly speaking, for a human being, there is no other practice than this practice. There is no other way of life than this way of life. Zen practice is the direct expression of our true nature,

Of course, whatever we do is the expression of our true nature, but without this practice it is difficult to realize what our human life is. It is our human nature always to be active, just as it is the universal nature of every existence. As long as we are alive, we are always doing something. But as long as you think, " I am doing this, or I have to do this, or I must attain something special ", you are actually not doing anything. When you give up, when you no longer want something, or when you do not try to do anything special, then you do something. When in what you do there is no gaining idea, then you do something. In zazen you can understand that what you are doing is not for the sake of anything. You may feel as if you were doing something special, but actually it is the expression of your true nature; it is

the activity which appeases your inmost desire. So in this sense, just to practice zazen is enough. But as long as you think you are practicing zazen for the sake of something, that is not true practice.

If you continue this simple practice everyday you will obtain some wonderful power. Before you attain it, it is some wonderful power, but after you attain it, it is not anything special. It is just you yourself, nothing special. As a Chinese poem says, "If you go to the province of Rosan, it is nothing special. However, Rosan is famous for its misty mountains, and Sekko is famous for its water." People think it must be wonderful to see the range of mountains covered by mists in Rosan, and the water which covers all the earth in Sekko. But if you go there you will see just water and just mountains. There is nothing special.

But it is a kind of mystery that for the people who have no experience of enlightenment, enlightenment is something wonderful. But if they attain it, it is nothing. Although it is nothing, it is not nothing. Do you understand? For the mother who has children, having children is nothing special. But if she lost her children, how would she feel? That is zazen. So, if you continue this practice, more and more you will acquire something...nothing special, but nevertheless something. You may say universal nature or Buddha nature, or enlightenment. You may call it by many names, but for the person who owns it, it is nothing, and it is something.

When we express our true nature, we are a human being.

When we don't, we don't know what we are. We are not an animal, because we walk on two legs. We are something different from an animal, but what are we? We may be a ghost; we don't know what to call ourselves. Such a creature does not actually exist. It is a delusion. We are not a human being anymore, but we do exist! When zen is not zen, nothing exists. Intellectually my talk makes no sense, but if you have experienced true practice you will understand what I mean. If something exists, it has its own true nature, its Buddha nature. In the Parinirvana Sutra Buddha says, "Everything has Buddha nature," but Dogen reads it in this way, "Everything is Buddha nature". There is a difference. If you say, "Everything has Buddha nature", it means Buddha nature is in each existence, so Buddha nature and each existence are different. But when you say, "Everything is Buddha nature", it means everything is Buddha nature itself. When there is no Buddha nature, there is nothing at all. Something apart from Buddha nature is just a delusion. It may exist in your mind, but such things actually do not exist.

So to be a human being is to be Buddha. Buddha nature is just another name for human nature, our true human nature. Thus even though you do not do anything, you are actually doing something. You are expressing yourself. You are expressing your true nature. Your eyes will express; your voice will express; your demeanor will express. The most important thing is to express our true nature in the simplest, most

adequate way and to appreciate the true nature in the smallest existence.

So I cannot express my joy in practicing zazen with you here, once a week. While you are continuing this practice, week after week, year after year, your experience will become deeper and deeper, and the experience you obtain will cover everything you do in your everyday life. The most important thing is to forget all gaining ideas, all dualistic ideas. In other words, just practice zazen in a certain posture. This is a very good point. Don't think about anything. Just remain on your cushion without thinking, without expecting anything. Then eventually you will resume to your own true nature. That is to say, your own true nature resumes to itself.