

Original Buddhism

" I want to make this point clear: Actually we are not the Soto School at all. We are just Buddhists. We are not even zen Buddhists; we are just Buddhists. If we understand this point we are truly Buddhists. "

To walk, to stand, to sit, and to lie down are the four activities, or four ways of behavior in Buddhism. Zazen is not one of the four ways of behavior, and according to Dogen Zengi, the Soto School is not one of the many schools of Buddhism. The Chinese Soto School may be one of the many schools of Buddhism, but according to Dogen his way was not one of the many schools. If this is so, you may ask why we put emphasis on the sitting posture, or why we put emphasis on having a teacher. The reason we put emphasis on the sitting posture, or zazen, is because zazen is not just one of the four ways of behavior. Zazen is the practice which contains innumerable activities; zazen started even before Buddha, and will continue to the eternal future. So this sitting posture cannot be compared to the other four activities.

Usually people put emphasis on some particular position, or on some particular understanding of Buddhism, and they think, " This is Buddhism ! " But we cannot compare our way with the practices people normally understand. Our teaching cannot be compared to other teachings of Buddhism. This is why we should have a teacher who does not attach to any particular understanding of

Buddhism. The original teaching of Buddha includes all the various schools. As a Buddhist our traditional effort should be like Buddha's: we should not attach to any particular school for doctrine. But usually, if we have no teacher, and if we take pride in our own understanding, we will lose the original characteristic of Buddha's teaching which includes all the various teachings.

Because Buddha was the founder of the teaching, people tentatively called his teaching 'Buddhism', but actually Buddhism is not some particular teaching. Buddhism is just Truth, which includes various truths in it. Zazen practice is the practice which includes the various activities of life in it. So actually we do not emphasize the sitting posture alone. How to sit is how to act. We study how to act by sitting, and this is the most basic activity for us. So that is why we practice zazen in this way. Even though we practice zazen, we should not call ourselves the zen school. We just practice zazen, taking our example from Buddha; that is why we practice. Buddha taught us how to act through our practice; that is why we sit.

To do something, or to live in each moment, means to take the temporal activity of Buddha's activity. To sit in this way is to be Buddha himself, as the historical Buddha was. The same thing applies to everything we do. Everything is Buddha's activity. So whatever you do, or even if you keep from doing something, Buddha is in that activity. Because people have no such understanding of Buddha, they think what they do is the most important

thing, without knowing who it is that is actually doing it. People think they are doing various things, but actually Buddha is doing everything. Each one of us has his own name, but those names are the many names of one Buddha. Each one of us takes many activities, but these activities are all Buddha's activities. Without knowing this people put emphasis on some activity, for instance, zazen practice. When they put emphasis on zazen, it is not true zazen. It looks as if they were sitting in the same way as Buddha, but there is a big difference in their understanding of our practice. They understand this sitting posture as just one of the four basic postures of man, and they think: "I now take this posture". But zazen is all the postures, and each posture is Buddha's posture. This understanding is the right understanding of the zazen posture. If you practice in this way, it is Buddhism. This is a very, very important point.

So Jogen did not call himself a Soto teacher, or a Soto disciple. He said, "Other people may call us the Soto School, but there is no reason for us to call ourselves Soto." You should not even use the name of Soto".

No school should consider itself a separate school. It should just be one tentative form of Buddhism. But as long as the various schools do not accept this kind of understanding, until all the schools give up calling

themselves by their particular names, we must accept the tentative name of Soto. But I want to make this point clear. Actually we are not the Soto School at all. We are just Buddhists. We are not even zen Buddhists; we are just Buddhists. If we understand this point we are truly Buddhists.

Buddha's teaching is everywhere. Today it is raining. This is Buddha's teaching. People think their own way, their own religious understanding, is Buddha's way, without knowing what they are hearing, or what they are doing, or where they are. Religion is not any particular teaching. Religion is everywhere. We have to understand our teaching in this way. We should forget all about some particular teaching; we should not ask which is good or bad. There should not be any particular teaching. Teaching is in each moment, in every existence. That is the true teaching.