

Right Effort

" If your practice is good, you may become proud of it. What you do is good, but something more is added to it. Pride is extra. Right effort is to get rid of something extra. "

The most important point in our practice is to have right effort. The right effort which is directed in the right direction is necessary. If your effort is headed in the wrong direction, especially if you are not aware of this, it is deluded effort. Our effort in our practice should be directed from being to non-being, from achievement to non-achievement.

Usually when you do something you want to achieve something, you attach to some result. From achievement to non-achievement means to get rid of some evil result of the effort. If you do something in the spirit of non-achievement, there is a good quality in it. If so, just to do something without any particular effort is enough. But when you make some special effort to achieve something, some excessive quality, some extra element is involved in it. You should get rid of excessive things. If your practice is good, without being aware of it, you will become proud of your practice. That pride is extra. What you do is good, but something more is added to it. So you should get rid of that something which is extra. This point is very, very important. But usually we are not subtle enough to realize this point, and we go in the wrong direction.

As all of us are doing the same thing, making the

same mistake, we do not realize it. So without realizing it, we are making many mistakes. And we create problems between us. This kind of bad effort is called being 'dharma-ridden' or 'practice-ridden'. You are involved in some idea of practice or attainment, and you cannot get out of it. When you are involved in some dualistic idea, it means your practice is not pure. By purity we do not mean to polish something, trying to make some impure thing pure. By purity we just mean things as they are. When something is added that is impure. When something becomes dualistic, that is not pure. If you think if you practice zazen you will get something, already you are involved in some impure practice. It is all right to say there is practice, and there is enlightenment, but we should not be caught by the statement. You should not be tainted by it. When you practice zazen, just practice zazen. If enlightenment comes, it just comes. We should not attach to the attainment. The true quality of zazen is always there, even if you are not aware of it, so forget all about what you think you may have gained from it. Just do it. The quality of zazen will express itself; then you will have it.

People ask what it means to practice zazen with no gaining idea, what kind of effort is necessary for that kind of practice. The answer is: effort to get rid of something extra from our practice. If some extra idea comes, you should try to stop it; you should remain in pure practice. That is the point toward which our effort is directed.

We say, "To hear the sound of one hand clapping." Usually for us this is the sound (demonstrating by clapping his hands together), but this is not sound (demonstrating as if clapping with just one hand). But actually this (one hand) is sound. Even though you do not hear it, there is sound. If you clap with two hands, you can hear the sound. But if sound did not already exist before you clapped, you could not make the sound. Before you make it there is sound. Because there is sound, you can make it, and you can hear it. Sound is everywhere. If you just practice it, there is sound. Don't try to listen to it. If you do not listen to it, the sound is all over. Because you try to hear it, sometimes there is sound, and sometimes there is no sound. Do you understand? Even though you do not do anything, you have the quality of zazen always. But if you try to find it, if you try to see the quality, you have no quality.

You are living in this world as one individual, but before you take the form of a human being, you are already there, always there. We are always here. Do you understand? You think before you were born you were not here. But how is it possible for you to appear in this world, when there is no you? Because you are already there, so you can appear in the world. And it is not possible for something to vanish which does not exist. Because something is there, something can vanish. You may think that when you die, you disappear, you no longer exist. But even though you vanish, something

which is existent cannot be non-existent. That is the magic. We ourselves cannot put any magic spells on this world. The world is its own magic. If we are looking at something, it can vanish from our sight, but if we do not try to see it, that something cannot vanish. Because you are watching it, it can disappear, but if no one is watching, how is it possible for anything to disappear? If someone is watching you, you can escape from him, but if no one is watching, you cannot escape from yourself.

So try not to see something in particular; try not to achieve anything special. You already have everything in your own pure quality. If you understand this ultimate fact there is no fear. There may be some difficulty, of course, but there is no fear. If people have difficulty without being aware of the difficulty, that is true difficulty. They may appear very confident, they may think they are making a big effort in the right direction, but without knowing it, what they do comes out of fear. Something may vanish for them. But if your effort is in the right direction, then there is no fear of losing anything. Even if it is in the wrong direction, if you are aware of that, you will not be deluded. There is nothing to lose. There is only the constant pure quality of right practice.