

forgetting
yourself

Study Yourself

" So to have some deep feeling about Buddhism is not the point. We just do what we should do, like eating supper and going to bed. This is Buddhism. "

The purpose of studying Buddhism is not to study Buddhism, but to study ourselves. It is impossible to study ourselves without some teaching. If you want to know what water is you need science, and the scientist needs a laboratory. In the laboratory there are various ways in which to study what water is. Thus it is possible to know what kind of elements water has, the various forms it takes, and its nature. But it is impossible thereby to know water in itself. It is the same thing with us. We need some teaching, but just by studying the teaching alone, it is impossible to know what 'I' in myself am. Through the teaching we may understand our human nature. But the teaching is not we ourselves; it is some explanation of ourselves. So if you are attached to the teaching, or to the teacher, that is a big mistake. The moment you meet a teacher you should leave the teacher, and you should be independent. You need a teacher so that you can become independent. If you are not attached to him, the teacher will point out to you the way to yourself. You have a teacher for yourself, not for the teacher.

Rinzai analyzed how to teach his disciples in four ways. Sometimes he talked about the disciple himself; sometimes he talked about the teaching itself; sometimes he gave an interpretation of the disciple or the teaching;

and finally, sometimes he did not give any instruction at all to his disciples. He knew that even without being given any instruction, a student is a student. Strictly speaking, there is no need to teach the student, because the student himself is Buddha, even though he may not be aware of it. And even though he is aware of his true nature, if he is attached to this awareness, that is already wrong. When he is not aware of it, he has everything, but when he becomes aware of it he thinks that what he is aware of is himself, which is a big mistake.

When you do not hear anything from the teacher, but just sit, this is called teaching without teaching. But sometimes this is not sufficient, so we listen to lectures and have discussions. But we should remember that the purpose of practice in this place is to study ourselves. To be independent we study. Like the scientist we have to have some means by which to study. We need a teacher because it is impossible to study ourselves by ourselves. But you should not make a mistake. You should not take what you have learned here for you yourself. The study you make here is a part of your everyday life, a part of your incessant activity. In this sense there is no difference between the practice here and the activity you have in everyday life. So to find the meaning of your life here is to find the meaning of your everyday activity. To be aware of the meaning of your life you practice zazen.

When I was at Eihei-ji Monastery, everyone was just doing what they should do. That's all. It is the same, as waking up in the morning; we have to get up. At Eihei-ji monastery, when we had to sit, we sat; when we had to bow to Buddha, we bowed to Buddha. That's all. And when we were practicing, we did not feel anything special. We did not even feel that we were leading a monastic life. For us, the monastic life was the usual life, and the people who came from the city were unusual people. When we saw them we felt, "Oh, some unusual people came!" But once having left Eihei-ji and, after being away for some time, coming back, it was different. When I came back, I heard the various sounds of practice - the bells and the monks reciting the sutra, and I felt a deep feeling. There were tears flowing out of my eyes, nose, and mouth! It is the people who are outside of the monastery who feel its atmosphere. Those who are practicing actually do not feel anything. I think that that is true for everything. When we hear the sound of the pine trees on a windy day, perhaps the wind is just blowing, and the pine tree is just standing in the wind. That's all that they are doing. But the people who listen to the wind in the tree will write a poem, or will feel something unusual. That is, I think, the way everything is.

So to feel something about Buddhism is not the main point. Whether that feeling is good or bad is out of the question. We don't mind whatever it is. Buddhism is not good or bad. We are doing what we should do. That is Buddhism. Of course some encouragement is necessary,

but that encouragement is just encouragement. It is not the true purpose of practice. It is just medicine. When we become discouraged we want some medicine. When we are in good spirits we do not need any medicine. You should not mistake medicine for food. Sometimes medicine is necessary, but it should not become our food.

So, of Rinzai's four ways of practice, the perfect one is not to give a student any interpretation of himself, nor to give him any encouragement. If we think of ourselves as our bodies, the teaching then may be our clothing. Sometimes we talk about our clothing; sometimes we talk about our body. But neither body or clothing are actually we ourselves. We ourselves are the big activity. We are just expressing the smallest particle of the big activity, that's all. So it's all right to talk about ourselves, but actually there is no need to do so. Before we open our mouths, we are already expressing the big existence, including ourselves. So the purpose of talking about ourselves is to correct the misunderstanding we have when we are attached to any particular temporal form or color of the big activity. It is necessary to talk about what our body is and what our activity is so that we may not make any mistake about them. So to talk about ourselves is actually to forget about ourselves.

Dogen Zengi said, " To study Buddhism is to study ourselves. / To study ourselves is to forget ourselves. " When you become attached to the temporal expression of your true nature, it is necessary to talk about Buddhism, or

else you will think the temporal expression is it. But this particular expression of it is not it. And yet at the same time it is it ! For awhile this is it; for the smallest part~~ite~~ of time, this is it. But it is not always so; the very next instant it is not so; thus it is not it. So that you will realize this fact, it is necessary to study Buddhism. But the purpose of studying Buddhism is to study ourselves and to forget ourselves. When you forget yourself, you will actually be the true activity of the big existence, or reality itself. When we realize this fact, there is no problem whatsoever in this world. And you can enjoy your life without having any problems or difficulties. The purpose of this practice is to be aware of this fact.