

make eternity alive in our lives? With our wisdom we can do it. To place yourself in the harmony of time and timelessness is to practice; being in the harmony of twelve hours and timelessness is enlightenment.

18 PRACTICE AND ENLIGHTENMENT

Our usual understanding of enlightenment is that if we practice zazen, we will become an enlightened person as a result. We think of enlightenment as a doorway to reach a goal: reach nirvana as soon as possible in order to satisfy human curiosity and desire. But that can make us very short-tempered. We cannot live in peace, with a feeling of security. We don't know how, because we don't base our lives on direct experience of real peace. This is a human problem.

Enlightenment is a state in which we are exactly one with the truth and see the ultimate nature of existence. When you really see time, you are present from moment to moment and a huge magnanimous world comes up. Whether you have experienced this or not, whether you are conscious of it or not, you already exist right in the middle of this magnanimous world. You are already an enlightened person because you are alive; you exist at the intersection of time and space. Your intellectual understanding cannot penetrate this, but through spiritual practice you can see it. When you see the original face of a moment, it is exactly nothing, but that nothing is very strong and vigorous, very active and energetic. Even though you don't know that this is life, it is why you survive. It makes you vividly alive.

The opportunity to live is something vigorous, just like a leaping fish. That leaping fish is eternity. Is eternity something that exists forever? Yes, but eternity is not something fixed or absolute. Eternity is leaping and alive, constantly changing. We cannot pin down exactly what it is, but we are alive because something supports our life and helps us live—something that exists always. This is called eternity, or the absolute.

Human beings are originally peaceful and harmonious because eternity is alive in our daily life. It is not a matter of metaphysical, philosophical, psychological, or religious understanding; it is fact. But we don't realize this because we stumble over our feelings, emotions, and ideas. When we see human life only in terms of ordinary time, where everything is chopped into separate pieces, then our eyes aren't open to see life in terms of universal time, where we are interconnected and interpenetrated with all sentient beings. So whatever we do in daily life, we have to make every possible effort to do it in peace and harmony with all beings.

When your daily living becomes one with peace and harmony, all beings are absorbed into your life and you become one with the original nature of existence. This is the manifestation of real peace. If you haven't experienced this, it seems to be abstract. But it's not abstract. There is nothing to conceptualize.

Zazen is an opportunity to let go of conceptualized thought. When you sit down, let go of yourself and be free from the idea that you are someone who is doing zazen. Then you are fluid and dynamic. When you practice like this, your zazen arouses the way-seeking mind,

and at the same time the way-seeking mind causes you to practice. Practice is like a filter: on one side is everyday life, and on the other side is direct experience of reality. This filter is not merely a device—it must be functioning. Something must be going through it. This is not a matter of discussion; we must be alive! We must act! Then zazen passes through the filter of practice, and in the next moment enlightenment appears.

Through our spiritual practice we experience wisdom, deeply seeing the truth of human life. Seeing eternity, dharma, truth, or the source of existence is complete freedom. Then, when everyday life is based on wisdom, it is called nirvana. The way-seeking mind, practice, enlightenment, and nirvana are constantly going in a circle that is beginningless and endless. They are nothing but being, nothing but time; this is called being-time. Being-time is a great device through which we can glance at the real self and come back to human life.

Enlightenment is not a particular state of mind that you perceive from a dualistic perspective; it is not something to try to get, something to be infatuated with, or something to stay with. We have to realize it, but enlightenment is beyond dualistic human perception. It is seeing life from the universal perspective. We live in peace and harmony with all sentient beings without discrimination. So instead of expecting something from zazen, just do zazen with wholeheartedness. Then you can see the entire universe. That is egolessness. At that time zazen is seen from eternity, and the zazen you do is manifested with the whole universe. This is real time, and this time is called enlightenment.

When egolessness comes up simultaneously with practice, practice is free from suffering. You become free from your own body and mind and experience complete spiritual security, stability, and imperturbability. This is called emancipation. Emancipation—the individual, direct experience of human life—is the culmination of the quest. Sometimes we say this is realization, or actualization. Actualization is not just the manifestation of your individual experience of the truth; it is your life interconnected with a tree's life, a bird's life, water's life, spring's life, autumn's life, and the life of the whole universe.

Buddhism teaches that all things—those we can see and those we cannot see, those we can think of and those we cannot think of, those we can imagine and those we cannot imagine—must be accepted as beings in Buddha's world. We should accept all beings and understand them: see where they come from, look at their face; and at the same time we should be free from all things. So just accept all aspects of human life, whatever they are. This is called freedom. Freedom is not escape from suffering or any of the various aspects of human life but acceptance of their true nature as beings in Buddha's world.

19 LIVING IN REAL TIME

Even though we don't have any proof, we can sense there is a beautiful world that can be seen with something more than our intellectual understanding. Seeing the vast expanse of human life is a target you can aim at—a destination. But you shouldn't be crazy about reaching it, because everyday life is already right now, right here. Right now, right here is the present moment—time.

Dogen Zenji tells us that even though we believe there is only the system of time that measures twenty-four hours in a day, this is not a complete understanding of time. Real time is the harmony of the time process—past, present, and future—with the source of time: timelessness.

If you haven't experienced timelessness, when Dogen describes it as the immense expanse of space where all sentient beings are interconnected in peace and harmony, it seems to be an abstract, metaphysical understanding. You can accept it that way, but a metaphysical view shouldn't be just metaphysical. Dogen's metaphysical understanding comes from his deep insight and empirical research for many, many years. So why don't you understand the metaphysical aspect of human life and investigate how to make it alive in your everyday life? This is what Dogen really emphasizes.