

## **Your Zazen is the Zazen of The Buddhas**

*excerpt from Appreciate Your Life by Taizan Maezumi Roshi*

MY TEACHER YASUTANI ROSHI would say, when you do shikantaza you should have faith. This faith has a particular connotation. This faith is the sense that you can actually do shikantaza. When working on koans, have faith in the fact that you can take care of the koan. Have faith in the fact that your zazen is the zazen of the buddhas and ancestors. You don't need to worry about anything. Just sit and appreciate that your zazen is buddha's zazen. Which buddha? Shakyamuni Buddha is okay. The buddhas and ancestors are okay. In other words, it is not "you" that is sitting, but buddha.

In Soto Zen there is the expression honsho myoshu. Honsho means "intrinsic enlightenment," and myoshu is "subtle practice." We say that practice and enlightenment are one. How are this practice and your realization one thing? Your zazen is sitting Buddha, or Buddha's zazen, which is realization itself. It is enlightenment itself. It becomes the unsurpassable wisdom (anuttara samyak sambodhi) itself. Have this kind of faith.

Our practice often becomes a cause of some kind of effect, like enlightenment. Doing zazen in order to create a certain effect or give rise to certain conditions is the wrong way to do zazen. There are many arguments in the history of Zen on this point. When we say that practice and enlightenment are one, we mean that practice is not a means through which we attain something. Rather, practice is itself a fulfillment of the originally enlightened life. What you are expecting or striving to attain is already here! From the very beginning, the Way is perfectly manifesting right here. Always here, as your life! Realization, or attaining enlightenment, is nothing but becoming aware of this fact.

This direct and clear fact of our life as the intrinsically enlightened life is difficult to see. How can you practice most effectively in order to realize this? It is not a matter of whether you should practice shikantaza or koans but rather how to practice effectively. When you work on koan, is there an awareness of "I am doing koan"? When you sit shikantaza, is there an awareness of "I am doing shikantaza"? If this is so, you need to take care of this. When you work on koan, be koan. When you sit shikantaza, be shikantaza. Let your practice of koan or shikantaza be the zazen of the Buddha. Simply don't let yourself and Buddha be separate. Don't separate yourself from koan or yourself from shikantaza. Don't discriminate between yourself and Buddha, between your life and the intrinsically enlightened life. Sit in this way.

We use many different expressions to convey this. We say it's Buddha or Buddha mind or emptiness or Buddha nature or the supreme Way. All are different expressions for this one life.

I like the koan in which a monk asked Master Gensha, "What is the Buddha mind?" Gensha answered, "All-beings mind." The monk asks Further, "What is all-beings mind?" Gensha says, "Buddha mind." We are like this monk, creating distinctions between this thing and that thing. Of course, discriminating is a very important function of the mind, but we need not create problems with it. When you sit, you often don't know what to do with this discursive mind, which goes on and on and on, endlessly. How do you stop it? You can't stop it! Stopping the mind is not the solution, either. So what do you do?

When you practice, keep in mind that practice and realization are one. Don't make them separate. Allow your zazen to be the manifestation of that fact, and just sit. It's okay if thoughts arise. Just let them go. Try it.

When you practice in this way, then sitting, standing, walking, lying down, all together become zazen. Then a very new vision of life will open up for you. Your zazen is the most precious dharma itself. Let us appreciate the subtle practice of intrinsic enlightenment. Or, let us appreciate the intrinsic realization in our subtle practice. Please do not chase after something else, but appreciate this very life—all the activities of life—as the manifestation of realization.