

## DON'T TRY TO FIGURE OUT WHO YOU ARE

*When you try to figure out who you are, you are using your self-centered, limited mind, and it doesn't work.*



After seeing his reflection in the water, Tozan Zenji wrote an enlightenment verse:

*Don't try to seek yourself.*

*Don't try to figure out who you are.*

*The "you" found in that way is far from the real you; it is not you anymore.*

*But when I go on my way, wherever I turn, I meet myself.*

This verse means that you must find yourself in each zazen period. When you take your own step, then wherever you go, you will meet with yourself. That is the Bodhisattva way.

You may think that you can figure out who you are by looking at your reflection in the water. Tozan Zenji says that although the image you see there is not you, what you see in the water, as it is, is actually you yourself. In the *Hokyo Zammai* Tozan Zenji makes the same statement: "You are not it; it is you."

He uses a paradoxical statement like this to catch your mind. "You are not it; it is you" means that when you try to figure out who you are, even if you see yourself in the mirror, that reflection is not you. But if you just see your image in the mirror, without any idea of trying to figure out what you are, that is you yourself.

When you try to figure out who you are, you are using your self-centered, limited mind, and it doesn't work. If you try to attain enlightenment, or to become some great Zen master, you cannot. Before you practice our way, you are Buddha. But when you practice in a small, self-centered way, you will lose yourself.

You may misunderstand this, and then think that whatever you do, that is our practice. That misunderstanding comes from a selfish, gaining idea. It is pretty hard to practice our way without any expectation or gaining idea, so we have various rules in the zendo. You can just follow the rules without any idea of self. Giving up your idea of self, you can practice real practice, which is not based on a self-centered idea. The rules will help you to give up your self-centered practice, which doesn't work, and will encourage your true practice.

We observe our rules just to help make it easy to keep up our practice. You may think that to follow rigid rules is a difficult practice, and say, "Oh, I wish I hadn't started this kind of difficult religion!" Maybe your small mind will feel that way, but if you know what real practice is, then following the various ethical precepts and rules of the Buddhist way will help you as well as others.