

HARMONY

The point is to find our position moment after moment, and to live with people moment after moment, according to the place and the circumstances.



In your everyday life, your root practice may be to raise flowers or to grow things in your garden. That is a good example of practice. When you sow a seed, you have to wait for the seed to come up, and when it comes up, you have to take care of it. That is our practice. Just to sow a seed is not enough; to take care of it day after day is also important to the good gardener. After you do something like build a house or write a book, your work may be

finished, but for a gardener, even once the garden is finished, it is necessary to take care of it every day. I think our way is the same.

The gardener knows that each seed and each plant has its own character and its own color. In the case of a stone garden, each stone has its own character. For example, a long stone has a solemn, profound feeling; a round one expresses perfection; a square one expresses some rigidity or austerity. If it has moss on it, it has a profound, mystical spirit to it. There are individual characteristics of the things that go in the garden.

It is important, though, not to just see things one by one in their individual characteristics, but to see how they are related to other things. People may say, "Whatever we do, that is Zen" or "I am already seeing 'things as it is,'" but they are seeing things one by one, and that is not enough. In a way, it is true that they are seeing "things as it is," but basically they are just seeing each object separately.

It is necessary for a gardener to make their garden beautiful. If possible, the gardener should express meaning or beauty according to some rules or order. If someone wants a calm garden, the gardener makes the garden accordingly, and if someone wants a solemn or austere feeling, the gardener makes the garden austere. The gardener chooses the materials and makes the garden calm or austere by contrast, association, or harmony. If there is a sharp, straight, narrow stone, it expresses some mystical feeling; if the stone is round, it expresses calm or peace. These two shapes are in

contrast. A round stone will be harmonious with every other stone; it goes perfectly with any kind of form. A stone which has a wide base expresses a stable feeling, in contrast to a massive stone. You cannot make a beautiful garden if you just arrange stones that are all of the same type; you should use some stones that are in contrast with the other stones you are using. The way to create harmony is to have some rules.

Likewise, if you want to live the Buddhist way, you should follow some rules. Just living however you like is not the way. There must be some rules if you want to live, in the true sense of the word, in relationship with others and in relationship with the “you” who has been living in the past and who will live tomorrow. Although it may look like there are no rules, actually there are strict rules.

This point is emphasized in Zen. Zen is not just personal practice, and our enlightenment is not just personal attainment. When we attain enlightenment, everything should be enlightened. That is the rule of enlightenment. It is when we find our position in this moment, and when we live accordingly with other beings, that we say that we attain enlightenment.

If you think enlightenment is just a personal experience, it is like collecting only square stones or only round stones. If someone who likes beautiful stones sees unusual blue or white stones, they may just keep

collecting the same ones. But with so many of the same stones, you cannot build an interesting garden. You should use various stones.

Enlightenment is the same. If you attach to some particular enlightenment, that is not true enlightenment. You should have various enlightenments. You should experience various experiences, and you should put more emphasis on relationships between people. In this way, we should practice back and forth according to the position in which we find ourselves.

This is the outline of our practice. If enlightenment were just collecting or being proud of personal experiences, it would not help at all. If that were enlightenment, there would have been no need for Buddha to strive hard to save people after he attained enlightenment. What is the purpose of wandering about the dusty road of illusion? If attaining enlightenment were the purpose of zazen, why would Bodhidharma have come to China from India and sat for nine years at Shaolin Temple? The point is to find our position moment after moment, and to live with people moment after moment, according to the place and the circumstances.