

SMALL MIND AND BUDDHA MIND

In your everyday practice do you develop your idea of yourself, or do you develop Buddha mind?



Whatever you do can be practice: drinking tea, eating, sleeping, walking, or sitting down. But how you understand these things is very important. If you miss the point, even if it looks like you are doing proper practice, it doesn't work. This is very important. You should see whether you are doing the activity for yourself, for the sake of the truth, for the sake of Buddha, or for the sake of others.

If there are many fruits in a basket, my way is to eat the worst fruit first. Why eat the best one first? When you eat the best one first, you discriminate

the best one from the not so good ones, and you put the idea of yourself first. If only one person is eating fruit, there will not be a problem. But if many people are eating from the same basket, you will be in trouble. If you eat the worst one first, there is no problem, even if you eat with many people. This attitude of eating the worst one is non-discrimination; you may say it is a kind of discrimination, but it is non-discrimination since a self-centered attitude is not involved.

In your everyday practice do you develop your idea of yourself, or do you develop Buddha mind? We should always put the Buddha mind first and the self next. We should always follow Buddha mind. To follow Buddha mind, it is necessary to realize what Buddha mind is. The way to realize Buddha mind is zazen practice. Through zazen practice you will intuitively know what Buddha mind is, because your selfish ideas or your small self will become smaller. By continuing zazen practice, you will get more and more accustomed to this intuitive knowledge of Buddha mind. The more you continue to practice, the smaller your small self becomes. Big self will take over your small self.

The practice which is self-centered is not Buddhist practice. Buddhist practice is to reduce our self-centeredness and to develop Buddha mind. The point of practice is to put the first principle first and the second principle next; to put the big self first and the small self next. It is to try to extend the big self always.

Whether you are a layperson or a monk, your practice should not be self-centered. It is the layperson who is supposedly self-centered, but priests can be very selfish. From a materialistic viewpoint priests are usually very poor and their life looks very unselfish. But from the spiritual viewpoint, priests may be selfish. If I have a Buddhist book, then you trust me! We cling to some teaching and think that what Buddha said or Dogen Zenji said is right. That is a very arrogant way.

A layperson may say, "I don't know; I don't know what is true, or what to do." They are very honest. But some priests are not so honest. They think they know many things, but actually they may not know so much. They can be in the priest's role without actually understanding so much. They may want to accumulate the treasures in their own mind, and be happy to count them—"How many books have I read? How much understanding do I have?"—studying so much just to be proud of the knowledge they have. That is why, spiritually, some priests are involved in a more self-centered practice than laypeople.

For both priests and laypeople the most important point is to develop Buddha mind instead of small mind. It is not so difficult to know what small self is and what big self is. If you know, you should try hard to develop big self. That is our practice.

We practice zazen and the other activities of Zen training in order to digest the knowledge of our zazen experience, to completely extend our realization

to our everyday life: to the way we speak, the way we treat things, and the way we treat people. The rules of Zen practice are set up to help you to extend the Buddhist way in your everyday life, to extend your realization to your everyday activity through the way you eat and the way you recite sutras. Even though you feel it is difficult, you will digest it more and more, and eventually what you do will help people even though you are not trying to help people.

When you come to this point, there is no Buddha, there is no layperson, there is no priest, there is no teaching. Because you have it, nothing special exists. You are actually always one with people, one with your friend, one with Buddha. Sometimes a Zen master may say, "No Buddha; kill Buddha." What does that mean? It means to be completely one with Buddha. You don't need Buddha anymore. You yourself are Buddha. You attain this through your practice.

At first, you may fear Buddhism because it looks like there are many precepts to observe, many rules to follow, and many Buddhas to worship. But if you worship Buddha, according to the Buddhist way, more and more you yourself will become Buddha, and you won't need another Buddha. Whenever you meet Buddha, naturally you will bow to Buddha, not seeking anything. That is more than worship; it is just to bow to Buddha. When I was young, I didn't like to bow, but teachers and monks just bow to Buddha. It may look like a very superficial practice, but after a long, great difficulty, it will look different.

Some people do not like the formality of Zen practice. I understand why you may not like traditional religion, based on your previous experiences with it. I understand how you feel. But if the strong criticism you have of religion comes from self-centeredness, then you must think more about what you say, how you understand, and how you see. Before you say something—even before you feel something—reflect on yourself. That is zazen practice. Your mind should be very clear so that you can see things as they are. Without practice, if you say something, it may be a one-sided view, a very self-centered statement or feeling. We should always make the effort to extend our Buddha mind.