

TAKING REFUGE IN BUDDHA

When we become one with it, there is no communion or interrelationship, because it is just one. That is to completely take refuge in its true sense.



To take refuge in Buddha means to become one with Buddha, or to find our true nature which is not different from Buddha.

Dogen Zenji uses the phrase *kanno doko*, which means “responsive communion.” It is a very difficult phrase to translate. *Kanno* means “to respond to each other,” and *doko* means “true relationship.” *Do* is *tao* or path, and *ko* is interrelationship.

In terms of conscious awareness, *kanno doko* happens for us in this way: we feel some coherence, interrelationship, or correspondence between Buddha

and ourselves. Although we feel that way, originally there is no difference between Buddha nature and human nature. So it is more than responsive communion or relationship, but in our conscious awareness, it feels like that.

By mutual communion, or kanno doko, we mean the true experience of Zen. It is not some ecstasy or mysterious state of mind; it is a deep joy that is even more than joy. You may have this true experience through some change in your mental state. But a change of mental state is not, strictly speaking, enlightenment. Enlightenment is more than that. A change of mental state comes with it, but it is more than that. The part that we experience is the joy of a mysterious experience, but something else follows. That something which follows aside from this experience is true enlightenment.

So you should not suppose that enlightenment, even though it is there, will always be experienced in terms of consciousness. By carrying out your various activities with this subtle caution, the experience becomes deeper and your consciousness will become more and more mature and smooth. You may say that enlightenment is the maturity of your experience of everyday life. When enlightenment does not follow, your experience is black and white. When true experience follows your conscious activity or conscious experience, the way you receive and use it is more natural, smooth, and deep.

This is not just joy. It is something more than joy. It may not be possible to experience enlightenment just in terms of consciousness, but what you do experience is much deeper than joy. This point should always be remembered.

If you remember this point, all the precepts are there. You will not be attached to some particular experience, and you will not be caught by a dualistic experience of good or bad, or of self or others.

We violate the precepts when we attach to some particular experience. When you have something, you will take some joy in possessing, and that is to break the precepts of not stealing and not being greedy about giving spiritual or material help to others. So when those two precepts are kept in the right way, all the precepts will be kept.

In short, when you do everything as you do zazen, then all the precepts will be there. We say that when we just sit, our mind is clear, and we have no special experience whatsoever. Maybe the only experience you will have is sleepiness or pain in your legs. But when you feel you attain enlightenment, or have some sudden change of mental state, even that experience is not true enlightenment. You will be seeing or realizing something in terms of consciousness, but that simply means you are seeing something, that's all. It may not be yours. You are seeing something there, something beautiful. That is your experience, that's all. It is a true experience, but it is not enough: we should become one with the truth. That is to take refuge in Buddha or truth. When we become one with it, there is no communion or interrelationship, because it is just one. That is to completely take refuge in its true sense.

Namu, to take refuge, in Japanese means to plunge into something. We say, "You cannot bring up water in a basket." If you put the basket on the water, the

basket will sink. That is the way. As long as you are making a dualistic effort, you are a basket and you cannot do anything. You are full of holes. Holes are you. We say *murochi*, wisdom with no holes. But our wisdom is hole wisdom, wisdom with holes. Murochi means no-holes wisdom, but for us no-holes wisdom is just to dip a basket in the water. While it is in the water there are no holes! That is namu, to take refuge, and that is how we practice zazen. This is the interpretation of precepts and the understanding of our zazen.