

Dogen Zenji

*To practice Zen is Zazen.

*Put aside all involvements and suspend all affairs. Do not think good or bad. Do not judge true or false. Give up the operation of mind; sensation, discrimination, cognition. Stop measuring with Nensokan; consciousness, thoughts and views. Have no designs on becoming a Buddha. How could that be limited to sitting or lying down?

About Zen

禪: Zen is a phonetic transcription of the Sanskrit word (dhyana) and 禪那: Zenna is a phonetic transcription of the Pali word (jhana).

- ① 静慮: dhyana = Right Observation (to observe the birth and death of the Dharma correctly), and to renounce worldly desires. 寂靜, (jyakujyo): Serenity (Abide in the Dharma and not to be disturbed. 審慮, (sinryo), (not to think about this and that, but to see things as they really are, birth and death).
- ② 等持, (toji), Samhita has the translation of 定, (jyo), 正定, (seijyo), meaning of reality, certainty, and samadhi [三昧, (zanmai) • 三摩地, (sanmaji) are a phonetic transcription of samadhi] Seven names of 定: samadhi—等引, (toin) • 等持, (toji) Samhita • 等至, (toji) • 静慮心一境性, (jhoryo sin ikkyosei) • 止 • 現法樂住)の一, one of (si gen ho raku jyu), 心一境性, (sinikyousei), concentration of mind are mentioned.
- ③ 思惟修, (siyui syu) thinking practicing = The mind dwells in a single boundary, being in 寂靜: Serenity and 審慮, (sinryo), (not to think about this and that, but to see things as they really are, birth and death), and it refers to a state in which 定, (jyo) and 慧, (e) are equal.
The translations are given in ①, ②, and ③ above.

About Zazen

The general understanding of zazen is too much focused on the form of sitting, and the true meaning of how to spend time in zazen is lost. I have summarized the important points here.

As it is said, **"To see the birth and death of the Dharma correctly,"** letting the truth of one's own (body-mind = six-root) activity as it really is (without interjecting or touching one's own views, ways of thinking, feelings, or thoughts), without any concern for what the six-root action is, and letting it act as it does at each and every moment.

The activity itself that is arising and perishing is the truth of your untouched truth. Then it becomes clear that

there is a perfect array of activities that have neither arisen nor perished, without really anything you have done about it.

This is why it is called "Shikantaza.(Just sitting)"

Just sitting and doing nothing, because it is not something to be done from now on. Do not ask questions. To practice Zen is not to inquire or search for something. There is the truth of the self before thinking or considering. This is "而今,(nikon): immediate present " "正当恁麼,(shoto inmo):This precise moment" the immediate state of being. (The following is a description of Rozan's writings on September 1, Heisei30.)

About Zen and Zazen

Although we call ourselves Soto Zen, I feel that we cannot correct the situation unless we understand how things are going in our current situation. So, I have provided a reprint here. There is no word that says to do Zazen. Originally, it is not the way to do Zazen.

For example, when I read Dogen Zenji's Shobogenzo · Zazen-gi at the local Fukouji temple, the first thing that comes out is "**To practice Zen is Zazen,**" as if to say, it is to practice Zen not to do Zazen.

Therefore, you say, "I'm here to sit." You don't come for zazen. You come to sit. "I'm here to sit." What they mean when they say, "I'm here for zazen," is that they are almost making a form of zazen. (Show a sitting posture) It is so when you ask a Osho san, a chief priest. Because the chief priest, the one who teaches, is like that, the one who learns, the rest do not.

As you can see in the Fugan zazen gi left by Dogen Zenji, who is our great predecessor, the content of the Fugan zazen gi, as listed here, is that at the very beginning, whether you have studied Zen, Buddhism, or religion, you must disregard all such things, and first of all, what each of you is doing right now, is the first thing that is taught. When we look at the content of the first part of that teaching, it's saying that you're properly in order before you practice, just as it's taught in all sutras. The true nature of the Dharma is the body's natural self-generated nature. There is no such thing as becoming something splendid by practicing from now on, from the very beginning. It is in every sutra that it is taught that everyone is perfected. That is the conclusion. That is the first thing that is taught. This is the truth of people, the way everyone is now. So, when you practice, you will see how different they are.

The first thing they teach is, "Look at the reality of your own situation and see if it is not like this." How important is this? When you come here to learn, if you have a lot of belongings, you will not be able to listen to what others say. It is not a matter of putting them away, removing them, or stopping them. Zen itself is not something like that.

And it's not just when you're sitting. That character for "za" is disturbing. You can't help but read it as "sitting". That's why it's a translation of Zen. It is a meaning translation. So, this is the translation of Zen. It means "静慮:dhyana. As you can see, it means "正觀 Right Observation (to observe the birth and death of the Dharma correctly), and to renounce worldly desires. There is no mention of sitting anywhere. The word 等持,(toji), Samhita has the translation 定,(jyo) and other various translations, including "心一境性,(sinikyousei), concentration of mind, being in 寂靜:Serenity and 審慮,(sinryo), (not to think about this and that, but to see things as they really are, birth and death), and it refers to a state in which 定,(jyo)and 慧(e) are equal.

There is no mention of sitting anywhere in Zen. How about you, everyone? You don't understand it that way, when you learn it. Now, we're going to sit, so when you say sit, when Sesshin is set, we're going to sit. So I don't want you to make a mistake. It's not sitting. It's to practice Zen. You have to devote yourself to Zen. And in order to practice Zen, zazen is the best way. It says that Zazen is the best way to learn Zen, as I will explain next. It is to say that practicing Zen is Zazen. In order to practice Zen, to learn Zen, there must be a form, like this.

Before that, **"For practicing Zen, a quiet room is suitable. Eat and drink moderately."** A quiet place is the first thing to do. If you eat too much, or if you are hungry and food is on your mind, it will be inconvenient for you to practice Zen. Then, because you can't do it if you have something bothering you, **"Put aside all involvements"** When you **"put aside all involvements,"** what comes out is that you are living like this now, this present situation, in which you are living, and that you only have use for this situation. This is indicated here. and suspend all affairs.

This is how you try to make it simple. There is nothing to do. As I said at the beginning, Dogen Zenji taught that the way things are is perfect, and you are told, "You understand," "You will understand," and then you understand, but when you look at yourself, you see that even though you understand, you are

not completely convinced. **"If the least like or dislike arises, the mind is lost in confusion."** If only there were a few things, it was mentioned. These two things are the way everyone is now, aren't they? I think it would be good if you take this as a way of practicing and learning Zen, and in this way, regarding **"correctly seeing the birth and death of the Dharma,"** you can take it this way. You yourself are the truth of the activity of your body and mind, **"you put aside all involvements and suspend all affairs,"** then there is only what is really unfolding right here and now. Therefore, to be able to stay with the unfolding process in this way, without inserting one's own thinking, perspective, feelings, or thoughts, is what Zen is all about. That is how Zen has been practiced.

My teacher said something like this. "Whatever the action of the six roots is, just let it be, each and every time, each and every function, each and every action. That activity itself, arising and perishing, is your untouched truth, the thing you are seeking, wanting to touch, wanting to know," and "There is no other way." When I list these sentences here again, what my teachers are conveying is clearer than the translation of the very first sentence, "靜慮: dhyana ."

After that, each of us must make it clear to ourselves that we are fully equipped with activities that have neither arisen nor perished, without really saying what we have done. This is why it is called "只管打坐: Shikantaza" Just sitting, doing nothing. The reason why it is explained like that is because we are not going to do anything from now on.

We would all know better if you specifically listed the six organs. Any of them will do. Even the thing called gripping, if you do it like this, (gripping an object), you instantly experienced that appearance. There is nothing to do from now on. You held this. You must have let go. That's how it is with everyone. Kon! (Hitting the desk) You heard it. You saw it. (Showing the object.) Everyone is working without any of their own perspectives, the way of thinking, feelings, or thoughts, without setting to work on anything. That is the way you are now. To spend time in this way is called Zen. Zen.

Because of the state of being now, it has been taught for a long time that we should not ask questions or look into things. It has been handed down throughout the orthodox teachings that when you do zazen, you must leave this 尋覓(jinshi), questioning and peeking. First, asking is a coarse thought. Peeping, peeping is a detailed thought, a fine thought. It is this peeping that tries to look

at things in great detail, saying, "That's the way it is, and what does that mean?" Asking is like mentioning what the thing is about and then instantly and roughly touching it in this way. To practice Zen is not walking around asking and seeking. It is not about changing anything. Before you think or contemplate, there is already this truth about yourself. If you do not understand this as the major premise, you will probably do something far from it when you sit from now on. Persons with limbs so bad they can barely walk come to Tokyo to practice Zazen. They ask if someone like me can do Zazen. Zazen, which is required to have a form, is a failure first. They cannot do it. You can't cross your legs. You cannot sit in the full lotus position. You can't sit in the half-lotus either. If you can't do that, you think you can't do Zazen. That's how much you are obsessed with the zazen form. So you sit, and you adjust your sitting posture all the time, and you are concerned about it. They ask, "Is this the right place for this, please look at it." That's all they ask me when I go there. In short, what is really called Zen is not questioned. This happened to be a meeting of incumbent monks, so I picked it up and talked about it. As long as the monks don't get it correct, we won't be able to correct the situation. There was also something like that.

We stopped by a nearby temple called Rinsenji, which has a magnificent seated statue of Uesugi Kenshin, as it is the temple of the person who drove us there. Then, in the car, as we were driving to the temple, his said, "My wife is so excited to see you today." I wondered what was going on. There is a plaque written by Kenshin Uesugi, who wrote "第一義,(dai-itigi), the supreme truth, the ultimate truth" on it, and I think there are many people who pay homage to it. When the chief priest is not at home, his wife is always there to help visitors. When you enter the temple, at the temple gate, there are various plaques saying "第一義,(dai-itigi), the supreme truth " written by various people, many of whom are very respectable. It would be nice to compare them and enjoy the calligraphy, but they are there.

The issue is that, first of all, it is possible to read. So, when you go to that area, the historical teaching that Kenshin Uesugi respected the first principle is very prevalent. Kenshin Uesugi respected righteousness, and he did not ask about the 第一義,(dai-itigi), the supreme truth," when the Great Master Bodhidharma talked with the Emperor Wu of Liang, saying, "What is the highest meaning of the holy truths?" In Buddhism, 第一義, (dai-itigi), is Zen. Zen is this, as I have been saying

all along, how each one of us in our current state of being, without really using our own way of thinking, is just how we are in our current activity itself.

I talked with his wife for about 30 minutes over a cup of tea, saying that we didn't have much time. The point is, she said that it was very regrettable that she could not give a truthful talk to visitors when they came to visit the temple. She said that when she asked the head priest and other people nearby, not a single person had yet been able to give her a satisfying answer to this question of "第一義,(dai-itigi). If you look in the dictionary, you will find that the word "第一義,(dai-itigi)" means the most important thing, right? All of them.

Then, everyone, what is the most important thing in this place? What is the most important thing here and now? It's not about the four days and three nights. The most important thing, as I have just mentioned, is none other than oneself, who is living here now. This is the point where you look at things. The most important thing is just how you are here and now. The most important thing. Because that's what we are living on. There is no activity apart from that. And as I have been telling you all along, in this moment, in this place where each of us lives our lives, there is a difference between being without a way of thinking and being with a way of thinking. It is a totally different world when you stay with the actual thing itself and handle it in your own way of thinking.

There was water falling into the hanging gutter in the back, and I said, "Mrs., that water is running all the time, isn't it?" and I asked, "Have you really heard the sound?" and she said, "What 's that?"

What does it mean to really hear the sound? When you hear a sound like this, **Tap!** (hitting the table), like I just mentioned, if you insert your own views, way of thinking, feelings, thoughts, etc., into the sound and handle it, you will not be able to hear the sound, even though the sound is there happening. **Tap!** You know that. It's that simple. You do things differently than it sounds. You know that. We've never done that because we're hardly aware of it. Zen is just this, isn't it? Kon! Like this. Without inserting our own way of thinking, our own feelings, our own thoughts, we just stay like this, is what Zen is all about. It's just about whether or not you have ever really touched the sound in this way.

"Dragonflies are flying, aren't they?" Have you ever really seen it? How do you look at it? How you look at them is that first, from your own way of thinking, views, feelings, you say, "Oh, autumn has come," "It's so nice," and so on, you

are in a totally different world from watching the dragonflies fly. To practice Zen, Zen, Zen. So it is not essentially about how to sit.

The proof of this is in the following words: "**For practicing Zen, a quiet room is suitable. Eat and drink moderately. Put aside all involvements and suspend all affairs. Do not think good or bad.**" This is the translation of the meaning of Zen.

"Give up the operation of mind; sensation, discrimination, cognition. Stop measuring with Nensokan; consciousness, thoughts and views. Have no designs on becoming a Buddha." This is the meaning of 静慮:dhyana . This is the translation of Zen. So, you might say, it doesn't matter whether you are sitting or lying. **"How could that be limited to sitting or lying down?"** Next comes **"At your sitting place,"** Then the question of how to spend one's time, there comes the issue of form. In the **"Fugan Zazengi,"** the form comes after this. **"Spread out a thick mat and put a cushion on it. Sit either in the full-lotus or half-lotus position,"** or the shape of the hands, sitting with the body upright, the eyes, and how to handle the tongue of the mouth, things like that are finally coming out. And then, when the form is finished, it says, **"and settle into steady, immovable sitting. Think of not thinking."** After all, it is this kind of 静慮:dhyana that is being taught. **"Not thinking, how do you think of not thinking? Non-thinking. This is the essential art of Zazen."** But the most important part of the Dogen Zenji's text has been cut. The first part was also cut. And most of the meaning of Zen was also cut out, so that only the sitting form is shown. So, please sit down now and look again at how you are spending your time. What do you weigh in on?

It appears in what's called the **Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra**, in the translation that says, 定(jyo) meaning of reality, certainty, and samadhi , it is written, "You should practice all kinds of 定(jyo). " When it says, "Practice all kinds of 定(jyo)," it means that when you are eating, you are eating; when you are cleaning, you are cleaning; when you are reading sutras, you are reading sutras; when you are taking a bath, you are taking a bath; when you are brushing your teeth, at each moment, at each time. There is no other way. I have said it many times. The only place to live is then and now. Even if you want to do something outside, you can't do anything. There is no outside. In terms of time. In terms of location, there is no other place to practice than where we are, so we always do it here. But because they don't know that, they say, "I'm going to sit." They go looking for a place to sit away from what they are doing now, and when

they go there, what they do, they say, "I sit." They don't practice Zen. Most of them are not doing Zen. The respectable people, when they ask where the dojo is, they always say "直心,(Jikishin). Your present place is the dojo, isn't it? 直心是道場 Jikishin Kore Dojo. Direct mind is the Dojo. (Direct mind means the state that things appear on this one through one's six organs.) This one is the dojo. Where else can you practice?

Otherwise, as it is written somewhere, when something is explained under the title of "In the Time of Zazen," it is already clear that there is a time when one is not doing Zazen when the title is attached. When you say when you are doing Zazen, there is a difference between when you are not doing Zazen and when you are doing Zazen. There must be two. In your own life, there is no such thing as a time when you are living your own life and a time when you are living someone else's. It's just your own life all the time, isn't it? Sometimes in your own life, there is no one like that. For the whole life. Basically, that's what I'm trying to tell you before I start advocating, so I've printed this. It is a preliminary knowledge.

Preliminary knowledge is pretty important too. Without preliminary knowledge, you learn things, but you don't get to this point. They don't get here first. I know many people like that. After decades of being in touch with so many places and people, they still don't know much about it. Because that's what the basics are. Why do you hang around when you really want to know yourself? You don't know, it's just that you don't touch yourself apart from your own discernment, so you don't get the truth of yourself as it is. It's that clear, from the very beginning. So, if you touch yourself, even just once, even slightly, how you are when you are out of your discernment, you will surely be changed. "Oh, I see what you mean." You have never seen it before. Even when you touch it like this, really. When you touch the sound, **KON! KON! KON! KON!** You haven't really listened to it. You're all... You're doing something wrong.

(This part of the story is over. Next he moves on to Zen Master Hyakujo Zenji's words about how our predecessors have practiced Zen.)