

NOTHING SPECIAL *“If you continue this simple practice every day, you will obtain some wonderful power. Before you attain it, it is something wonderful, but after you attain it, it is nothing special.”*

I do not feel like speaking after zazen. I feel the practice of zazen is enough. But if I must say something I think I would like to talk about how wonderful it is to practice zazen. Our purpose is just to keep this practice forever. This practice started from beginningless time, and it will continue into an endless future. Strictly speaking, for a human being there is no other practice than this practice. There is no other way of life than this way of life. Zen practice is the direct expression of our true nature.

Of course, whatever we do is the expression of our true nature, but without this practice it is difficult to realize. It is our human nature to be active and the nature of every existence. As long as we are alive, we are always doing something. But as long as you think, “I am doing this,” or “I have to do this,” or “I must attain something special,” you are actually not doing anything. When you give up, when you no longer want something, or when you do not try to do anything special, then you do something. When there is no gaining idea in what you do, then you do something. In zazen what you are doing is not for the sake of anything. You may feel as if you are doing something special, but actually it is only the expression of your true nature; it is the activity which appeases your inmost desire. But as long as you think you are practicing zazen for the sake of something, that is not true practice.

If you continue this simple practice every day you will obtain a wonderful power. Before you attain it, it is something wonderful, but after you obtain it, it is nothing special. It is just you yourself, nothing special. As a Chinese poem says, “I went and I returned. It was nothing special. Rozan famous for its misty mountains; Sekko for its water.” People think it must be wonderful to see the famous

range of mountains covered by mists, and the water said to cover all the earth. But if you go there you will just see water and mountains. Nothing special.

It is a kind of mystery that for people who have no experience of enlightenment, enlightenment is something wonderful. But if they attain it, it is nothing. But yet it is not nothing. Do you understand? For a mother with children, having children is nothing special. That is zazen. So, if you continue this practice, more and more you will acquire something—nothing special, but nevertheless something. You may say “universal nature” or “Buddha nature” or “enlightenment.” You may call it by many names, but for the person who has it, it is nothing, and it is something.

When we express our true nature, we are human beings. When we do not, we do not know what we are. We are not an animal, because we walk on two legs. We are something different from an animal, but what are we? We may be a ghost; we do not know what to call ourselves. Such a creature does not actually exist. It is a delusion. We are not a human being anymore, but we do exist. When Zen is not Zen, nothing exists. Intellectually my talk makes no sense, but if you have experienced true practice, you will understand what I mean. If something exists, it has its own true nature, its Buddha nature. In the Parinirvana Sutra, Buddha says, “Everything has Buddha nature,” but Dogen reads it in this way: “Everything is Buddha nature.” There is a difference. If you say, “Everything has Buddha nature,” it means Buddha nature is in each existence, so Buddha nature and each existence are different. But when you say, “Everything is Buddha nature,” it means everything is Buddha nature itself. When there is no Buddha nature, there is nothing at all. Something apart from Buddha nature is just a delusion. It may exist in your mind, but such things actually do not exist.

So to be a human being is to be a Buddha. Buddha nature is just another name for human nature, our true human nature. Thus even though you do not do anything, you are actually doing something. You are expressing yourself. You are expressing your true nature. Your eyes will express; your voice will express; your demeanor will

express. The most important thing is to express your true nature in the simplest, most adequate way and to appreciate it in the smallest existence.

While you are continuing this practice, week after week, year after year, your experience will become deeper and deeper, and your experience will cover everything you do in your everyday life. The most important thing is to forget all gaining ideas, all dualistic ideas. In other words, just practice zazen in a certain posture. Do not think about anything. Just remain on your cushion without expecting anything. Then eventually you will resume your own true nature. That is to say, your own true nature resumes itself.