

This is the basic teaching of how to live in this world. Whatever you may feel about it, you have to accept it. You have to make this kind of effort.

So until we become strong enough to accept difficulty as pleasure, we have to continue this effort. Actually, if you become honest enough, or straightforward enough, it is not so difficult to accept this truth. You can change your way of thinking a little bit. It is difficult, but this difficulty will not always be the same. Sometimes it will be difficult, and sometimes it will not be so difficult. If you are suffering, you will have some pleasure in the teaching that everything changes. When you are in trouble, it is quite easy to accept the teaching. So why not accept it at other times? It is the same thing. Sometimes you may laugh at yourself, discovering how selfish you are. But no matter how you feel about this teaching, it is very important for you to change your way of thinking and accept the truth of transiency.

**T**HE QUALITY OF BEING *“When you do something, if you fix your mind on the activity with some confidence, the quality of your state of mind is the activity itself. When you are concentrated on the quality of your being, you are prepared for the activity.”*

The purpose of zazen is to attain the freedom of our being, physically and mentally. According to Dogen-zenji, every existence is a flashing into the vast phenomenal world. Each existence is another expression of the quality of being itself. I often see many stars early in the morning. The stars are nothing but the light which has traveled at great speed many miles from the heavenly bodies. But for me the stars are not speedy beings, but calm, steady, and peaceful beings. We say, “In calmness there should be activity; in activity there

should be calmness." Actually, they are the same thing; to say "calmness" or to say "activity" is just to express two different interpretations of one fact. There is harmony in our activity, and where there is harmony there is calmness. This harmony is the quality of being. But the quality of being is also nothing but its speedy activity.

When we sit we feel very calm and serene, but actually we do not know what kind of activity is going on inside our being. There is complete harmony in the activity of our physical system, so we feel the calmness in it. Even if we do not feel it, the quality is there. So for us there is no need to be bothered by calmness or activity, stillness or movement. When you do something, if you fix your mind on the activity with some confidence, the quality of your state of mind is the activity itself. When you are concentrated on the quality of your being, you are prepared for the activity. Movement is nothing but the quality of our being. When we do zazen, the quality of our calm, steady, serene sitting is the quality of the immense activity of being itself.

"Everything is just a flashing into the vast phenomenal world" means the freedom of our activity and of our being. If you sit in the right manner, with the right understanding, you attain the freedom of your being, even though you are just a temporal existence. Within this moment, this temporal existence does not change, does not move, and is always independent from other existences. In the next moment another existence arises; we may change to something else. Strictly speaking, there is no connection between I myself yesterday and I myself in this moment; there is no connection whatsoever. Dogen-zenji said, "Charcoal does not become ashes." Ashes are ashes; they do not belong to charcoal. They have their own past and future. They are an independent existence because they are a flashing into the vast phenomenal world. And charcoal and red-hot fire are quite different existences. Black charcoal is also a flashing into the vast phenomenal world. Where there is black charcoal there is not red-hot charcoal. So black charcoal is

independent of red-hot charcoal; ashes are independent of firewood; each existence is independent.

Today I am sitting in Los Altos. Tomorrow morning I shall be in San Francisco. There is no connection between the "I" in Los Altos and the "I" in San Francisco. They are quite different beings. Here we have the freedom of existence. And there is no quality connecting you and me; when I say "you," there is no "I"; when I say "I," there is no "you." You are independent, and I am independent; each exists in a different moment. But this does not mean we are quite different beings. We are actually one and the same being. We are the same, and yet different. It is very paradoxical, but actually it is so. Because we are independent beings, each one of us is a complete flashing into the vast phenomenal world. When I am sitting, there is no other person, but this does not mean I ignore you. I am completely one with every existence in the phenomenal world. So when I sit, you sit; everything sits with me. That is our zazen. When you sit, everything sits with you. And everything makes up the quality of your being. I am a part of you. I go into the quality of your being. So in this practice we have absolute liberation from everything else. If you understand this secret there is no difference between Zen practice and your everyday life. You can interpret everything as you wish.

A wonderful painting is the result of the feeling in your fingers. If you have the feeling of the thickness of the ink in your brush, the painting is already there before you paint. When you dip your brush into the ink you already know the result of your drawing, or else you cannot paint. So before you do something, "being" is there, the result is there. Even though you look as if you were sitting quietly, all your activity, past and present, is included; and the result of your sitting is also already there. You are not resting at all. All the activity is included within you. That is your being. So all results of your practice are included in your sitting. This is our practice, our zazen.

Dogen-zenji became interested in Buddhism as a boy as

he watched the smoke from an incense stick burning by his dead mother's body, and he felt the evanescence of our life. This feeling grew within him and finally resulted in his attainment of enlightenment and the development of his deep philosophy. When he saw the smoke from the incense stick and felt the evanescence of life, he felt very lonely. But that lonely feeling became stronger and stronger, and flowered into enlightenment when he was twenty-eight years old. And at the moment of enlightenment he exclaimed, "There is no body and no mind!" When he said "no body and no mind," all his being in that moment became a flashing into the vast phenomenal world, a flashing which included everything, which covered everything, and which had immense quality in it; all the phenomenal world was included within it, an absolute independent existence. That was his enlightenment. Starting from the lonely feeling of the evanescence of life, he attained the powerful experience of the quality of his being. He said, "I have dropped off mind and body." Because you think you have body or mind, you have lonely feelings, but when you realize that everything is just a flashing into the vast universe, you become very strong, and your existence becomes very meaningful. This was Dogen's enlightenment, and this is our practice.

~~NATURALNESS "Moment after moment,  
everyone comes out from nothingness. This is the  
true joy of life."~~

~~There is a big misunderstanding about the idea of naturalness. Most people who come to us believe in some freedom or naturalness, but their understanding is what we call *jinen ken gedo*, or heretical naturalness. *Jinen ken gedo* means that there is no need to be formal—just a kind of "let-alone policy" or sloppiness. That is naturalness for most people. But that is not the naturalness we mean. It is rather difficult~~