

Zazen Yojinki

Points to keep in mind when practicing zazen by Keizan Jokin Zenji
translated by Thomas Cleary, etc.

Zazen means to clarify the mind-ground and dwell comfortably in your actual nature. This is called revealing yourself and manifesting the original-ground. In zazen both body and mind drop off. Zazen is far beyond the form of sitting or lying down. Free from considerations of good and evil, zazen transcends distinctions between ordinary people and sages, it goes far beyond judgments of deluded or enlightened. Zazen includes no boundary between sentient beings and buddha. Therefore put aside all affairs, and let go of all associations. Do nothing at all. The six senses produce nothing.

What is this? Its name is unknown. It cannot be called "body", it cannot be called "mind". Trying to think of it, the thought vanishes. Trying to speak of it, words die. It is like a fool, an idiot. It is as high as a mountain, deep as the ocean. Without peak or depths, its brilliance is unthinkable, it shows itself silently. Between sky and earth, only this whole body is seen.

This one is without comparison - he has completely died. Eyes clear, he stands nowhere. Where is there any dust? What can obstruct such a one?

Clear water has no back or front, space has no inside or outside. Completely clear, its own luminosity shines before form and emptiness were fabricated. Objects of mind and mind itself have no place to exist.

This has always already been so but it is still without a name. The third patriarch, great teacher, temporarily called it "mind", and the venerable Nagarjuna once called it "body". Enlightened essence and form, giving rise to the bodies of all the Buddhas, it has no "more" or "less" about it.

This is symbolized by the full moon but it is this mind which is enlightenment itself. The luminosity of this mind shines throughout the past and brightens as the present. Nagarjuna used this subtle symbol for the samadhi of all the Buddhas but this mind is signless, non-dual, and differences between forms are only apparent.

Just mind, just body. Difference and sameness miss the point. Body arises in mind and, when the body arises, they appear to be distinguished. When one wave arises, a thousand waves follow; the moment a single mental fabrication arises, numberless things appear. So the four elements and five aggregates mesh, four limbs and five senses appear and on and on until the thirty-six body parts and the twelve-fold chain of interdependent emergence. Once fabrication arises, it develops continuity but it still only exists through the piling up of myriad dharmas.

The mind is like the ocean waters, the body like the waves. There are no waves without water and no water without waves; water and waves are not separate, motion and stillness are not different. So it is said, "A person comes and goes, lives and dies, as the imperishable body of the four elements and five aggregates."

Now, zazen is entering directly into the ocean of buddha-nature and manifesting the body of the Buddha. The pure and clear mind is actualized in the present moment; the original light shines everywhere. The water in the ocean neither increases nor decreases, and the waves never cease. Buddhas have appeared in this world for the sake of the one great matter; to show the wisdom and insight of the Buddha to all living beings and to make their entry possible. For this, there is a peaceful and pure way: zazen. This is nothing but the samadhi, in which all buddhas receive and use themselves as buddhas (jijuyu-zanmai). It is also called the king of samadhis. If you dwell in this samadhi for even a short time, the mind-ground will be directly clarified. You should know that this is the true gate of the buddha-way.

If you wish to clarify the mind-ground, you should relinquish your various types of limited knowledge and understanding. Throw away both worldly affairs and buddha-dharma. Eliminate all delusive emotions. When the true mind of the sole reality is manifest, the clouds of delusion will clear away and the moon of the mind will shine brightly.

The Buddha said, "Listening and thinking are like being outside of the gate; zazen is returning home and sitting in peace." How true this is! When we are listening and thinking, the various views have not been put to rest and the mind is still running over. Therefore other activities are like being outside of the

gate. Zazen alone brings everything to rest and, flowing freely, reaches everywhere. So zazen is like returning home and sitting in peace.

The delusions of the five-obstructions all arise out of basic ignorance. Being ignorant means not clarifying yourself. To practice zazen is to throw light on yourself. Even though the five obstructions are eliminated, if basic ignorance is not eliminated, you are not a buddha-ancestor. If you wish to eliminate basic ignorance, zazen practice of the way is the key.

An ancient master said, "When delusive thoughts cease, tranquility arises; when tranquility arises, wisdom appears; when wisdom appears, reality reveals itself." If you want to eliminate delusive thoughts, you should cease to discriminate between good and evil. Give up all affairs with which you are involved; do not occupy your mind with any concerns nor become physically engaged in any activity. This is the primary point to bear in mind. When delusive objects disappear, delusive mind falls away.

When delusive mind falls away, the unchanging reality manifests itself and we are always clearly aware. It is not extinction; it is not activity. Therefore, you should avoid engaging in any arts or crafts, medicine or fortune-telling. Needless to say, you should stay away from music and dancing, arguing and meaningless discussions, fame and personal profit. While composing poetry can be a way to purify one's mind, do not be fond of it. Give up writing and calligraphy. This is the fine precedent set by practitioners of the Way. This is essential for harmonizing the mind.

Wear neither luxurious clothing nor dirty rags. Luxurious clothing gives rise to greed and may also arouse fear of theft. Thus, they are a hindrance for a practitioner of the way. Even if someone offers them to you, it is the excellent tradition of the masters to refuse them. If you already own luxurious clothes, do not keep them. Even if these clothes are stolen, do not chase after or regret its loss. Old or dirty clothes should be washed and mended; clean them thoroughly before wearing them. If you do not clean them, they will cause you to become chilled and sick. This will be a hindrance to your practice. Although we should not be anxious about bodily life, insufficient clothing, insufficient food, and insufficient sleep are called the three insufficiencies and will cause our practice to suffer.

Do not eat anything alive, hard, or spoiled. Such impure foods will make your belly churn and cause heat and discomfort of body-mind, making your sitting difficult. Do not indulge in fine foods. It is not only bad for your body and mind, but also shows you are not yet free from greed. Eat just enough food to support your life and do not be fond of its taste. If you sit after eating too much, you will get sick. Wait for a while before sitting after eating big or small meals. Monks must be moderate in eating and hold their portions to two-thirds of what they can eat. All healthy foods, sesame, wild yams and so on, can be eaten. Essentially, you should harmonize body-mind.

When you are sitting in zazen, do not prop yourself up against a wall, meditation brace, or screen. Also, do not sit in windy places or high, exposed places as this can cause illness. Sometimes your body may feel hot or cold, rough or smooth, stiff or loose, heavy or light, or astonishingly wide-awake. Such sensations are caused by a disharmony of mind and breath. You should regulate your breathing as follows: open your mouth for a little while, letting long breaths be long and short breaths be short, and harmonize it gradually. Follow your breath for a while; when awareness comes, your breathing will be naturally harmonized. After that, breathe naturally through your nose.

Your mind may feel as though it is sinking or floating, dull or sharp, or as though you can see outside the room, inside your body, or the body of buddhas or bodhisattvas. Sometimes, you may feel as though you have wisdom and can understand the sutras or commentaries thoroughly. These unusual and strange conditions are all sicknesses that occur when the mind and breath are not in harmony. When you have this kind of sickness, settle your mind on your feet. When you feel dull, place your mind on your hairline (three inches above the center of the eyebrows) or between your eyes. When your mind is distracted, place it on the tip of your nose or on your lower abdomen, one and a half inches below the navel (tanden). Usually, place your mind on the left palm during sitting. When you sit for a long time, even though you do not try to calm your mind, it will, of its own accord, be free of distraction.

Also, although the ancient teachings are the traditional instructions for illuminating the mind, do not read, write, or listen to them too much. Running to excess scatters the mind. Generally, anything that wears out body-mind

causes illness.

Do not sit where there are fires, floods, high winds, thieves; by the ocean, near bars, brothels, where widows or virgins live, or near places where courtesans play music. Do not live near kings, ministers, rich and powerful families, or people who have many desires, who seek after fame, or who like to argue meaninglessly.

Although grand Buddhist ceremonies or the building of large temples are very good things, people who devote themselves to zazen should not be involved in such activities. Don't be fond of preaching the Dharma as this leads to distraction and scattering.

Do not be delighted by large assemblies; nor covet disciples. Do not practice and study too many things. Do not sit where it is too bright or too dark, too cold or too hot; nor should you sit where idle pleasure-seekers and harlots live. Stay in a monastery where you have a good teacher and fellow practitioners. Or reside in the deep mountains or glens. A good place to practice walking meditation is where there is clear water and green mountains. A good place for purifying the mind is by a stream or under a tree. Contemplate impermanence; do not forget it. This will encourage you to seek the way.

You should spread a mat thick enough for comfortable sitting. The place for practice should be clean. Always burn incense and offer flowers to the guardians of the dharma, the buddhas and bodhisattvas, who secretly protect your practice. If you enshrine a statue of a buddha, bodhisattva, or an arhat, no demons can tempt you.

Remain always compassionate, and dedicate the limitless virtue of zazen to all living beings. Do not be arrogant; do not be proud of yourself and of your understanding of dharma. Being arrogant is the way of outsiders and ignorant people.

Vow to cut off all delusions and realize enlightenment. Just sit without doing anything. This is the essence of the practice of zazen. Always wash your eyes and feet, keep your body and mind at ease and tranquil, and maintain a proper demeanor. Throw away worldly sentiments, yet do not attach yourself to a

sublime feeling of the way.

Though you should not begrudge anyone the dharma, do not preach it unless you are asked. Even if someone asks, keep silent three times; if the person still asks you from his or her heart, then teach him or her. Out of ten times you may desire to speak, remain silent for nine; as if mold were growing around your mouth. Be like a folded fan in December, or like a wind-bell hanging in the air, indifferent to the direction of the wind. This is how a person of the Way should be. Do not use the dharma to profit at the expense of others. Do not use the way as a means to make yourself important. These are the most important points to keep in mind.

Zazen is not based upon teaching, practice or realization; instead these three aspects are all contained within it. Measuring realization is based upon some notion of enlightenment - this is not the essence of zazen. Practice is based upon strenuous application - this is not the essence of zazen. Teaching is based upon freeing from evil and cultivating good - this is not the essence of zazen.

Teaching is found in Zen but it is not the usual teaching. Rather, it is a direct pointing, just expressing the way, speaking with the whole body. Such words are without sentences or clauses. Where views end and concept is exhausted, the one word pervades the ten directions without setting up so much as a single hair. This is the true teaching of the buddhas and patriarchs.

Although we speak of "practice", it is not a practice that you can do. That is to say, the body does nothing, the mouth does not recite, the mind doesn't think things over, the six senses are left to their own clarity and unaffected. So this is not the sixteen stage practice of the hearers. Nor is it the practice of understanding the twelve factors of inter-dependent emergence of those whose practice is founded upon isolation. Nor is it the six perfections within numberless activities of the bodhisattvas. It is without struggle at all so is called awakening or enlightenment. Just rest in the samadhi in which all of the buddhas receive and use themselves as buddhas (jijuyu-zanmai), wandering playfully in the four practices of peace and bliss of those open to openness. This is the profound and inconceivable practice of buddhas and patriarchs.

Although we speak of realization, this realization does not hold to itself as

being "realization". This is practice of the supreme samadhi which is the knowing of unborn, unobstructed, and spontaneously arising awareness. It is the door of luminosity which opens out onto the realization of the Buddha, born through the practice of the great ease. This goes beyond the patterns of holy and profane, goes beyond confusion and wisdom. This is the realization of unsurpassed enlightenment as our own nature.

Zazen is also not based upon discipline, practice, or wisdom. These three are all contained within it.

Discipline is usually understood as ceasing wrong action and eliminating evil. In zazen the whole thing is known to be non-dual. Cast off the numberless concerns and rest free from entangling yourself in the "Buddhist way" or the "worldly way." Leave behind feelings about the path as well as your usual sentiments. When you leave behind all opposites, what can obstruct you? This is the formless discipline of the ground of mind.

Practice usually means unbroken concentration. Zazen is dropping the body-mind, leaving behind confusion and understanding. Unshakeable, without activity, it is not deluded but still like an idiot, a fool. Like a mountain, like the ocean. Without any trace of motion or stillness. This practice is no-practice because it has no object to practice and so is called great practice.

Wisdom is usually understood to be clear discernment. In zazen, all knowledge vanishes of itself. Mind and discrimination are forgotten forever. The wisdom-eye of this body has no discrimination but is clear seeing of the essence of awakening. From the beginning it is free of confusion, cuts off concept, and open and clear luminosity pervades everywhere. This wisdom is no-wisdom; because it is traceless wisdom, it is called great wisdom.

The teaching that the buddhas have presented all throughout their lifetimes are just this discipline, practice, and wisdom. In zazen there is no discipline that is not maintained, no practice that is uncultivated, no wisdom that is unrealized. Conquering the demons of confusion, attaining the way, turning the wheel of the Dharma and returning to tracelessness all arise from the power of this. Supernormal powers and inconceivable activities, emanating light and expounding the teaching- all of these are present in this zazen. Penetrating Zen

is zazen.

To practice sitting, find a quiet place and lay down a thick mat. Don't let wind, smoke, rain or dew come in. Keep a clear space with enough room for your knees. Although in ancient times there were those who sat on diamond seats or on large stones for their cushions. The place where you sit should not be too bright in the daytime or too dark at night; it should be warm in winter and cool in summer. That's the key.

Drop mind, intellect and consciousness, leave memory, thinking, and observing alone. Don't try to fabricate Buddha. Don't be concerned with how well or how poorly you think you are doing; just understand that time is as precious as if you were putting out a fire on your head.

The Buddha sat straight, Bodhidharma faced the wall; both were whole-hearted and committed. Sekiso was like a gnarled dead tree. Nyojo warned against sleepy sitting and said, "Just-sitting is all you need. You don't need to make burning incense offerings, meditate upon the names of buddhas, repent, study the scriptures or do recitation rituals."

When you sit, wear the kesa (except in the first and last parts of the night when the daily schedule is not in effect). Don't be careless. The cushion should be about twelve inches thick and thirty-six in circumference. Don't put it under the thighs but only from mid-thigh to the base of the spine. This is how the buddhas and patriarchs have sat. You can sit in the full or half lotus postures. To sit in the full lotus, put the right foot on the left thigh and the left foot on the right thigh. Loosen your robes but keep them in order. Put your right hand on your left heel and your left hand on top of your right, thumbs together and close to the body at the level of the navel. Sit straight without leaning to left or right, front or back. Ears and shoulders, nose and navel should be aligned. Place the tongue on the palate and breathe through the nose. The mouth should be closed. The eyes should be open but not too wide nor too slight. Harmonizing the body in this way, breathe deeply with the mouth once or twice. Sitting steadily, sway the torso seven or eight times in decreasing movements. Sit straight and alert.

Now think of what is without thought. How can you think of it? Be beyond thinking. This is the essence of zazen. Shatter obstacles and become intimate

with awakening awareness.

When you want to get up from stillness, put your hands on your knees, sway seven or eight times in increasing movements. Breathe out through the mouth, put your hands to the floor and get up lightly from the seat. Slowly walk, circling to right or left.

If dullness or sleepiness overcome your sitting, move to the body and open the eyes wider, or place attention above the hairline or between your eyebrows. If you are still not fresh, rub the eyes or the body. If that still doesn't wake you, stand up and walk, always clockwise. Once you've gone about a hundred steps you probably won't be sleepy any longer. The way to walk is to take a half step with each breath. Walk without walking, silent and unmoving.

If you still don't feel fresh after doing kinhin, wash your eyes and forehead with cold water. Or chant the "Three Pure Precepts of the Bodhisattvas". Do something; don't just fall asleep. You should be aware of the great matter of birth and death and the swiftness of impermanence. What are you doing sleeping when your eye of the way is still clouded? If dullness and sinking arise repeatedly you should chant, "Habituality is deeply rooted and so I am wrapped in dullness. When will dullness disperse? May the compassion of the buddhas and patriarchs lift this darkness and misery."

If the mind wanders, place attention at the tip of the nose and tanden and count the inhalations and exhalations. If that doesn't stop the scattering, bring up a phrase and keep it in awareness - for example: "What is it that comes thus?" or "When no thought arises, where is affliction? - Mount Sumeru!" or "What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the West? - The cypress in the garden." Sayings like this that you can't draw any flavor out of are suitable.

If scattering continues, sit and look to that point where the breath ends and the eyes close forever and where the child is not yet conceived, where not a single concept can be produced. When a sense of the two-fold emptiness of self and things appears, scattering will surely rest.

Arising from stillness, carry out activities without hesitation. This moment is the koan. When practice and realization are without complexity then the koan

is this present moment. That which is before any trace arises, the scenery on the other side of time's destruction, the activity of all buddhas and patriarchs, is just this one thing.

You should just rest and cease. Be cooled, pass numberless years as this moment. Be cold ashes, a withered tree, an incense burner in an abandoned temple, a piece of unstained silk. This is my earnest wish.