

Ordinary Mind is the Way

written by mist-wandering wayfarer Kokyo on an autumn day in the Land of Calm Abiding, 2023

Ordinary mind is the Way, originally perfect and all-pervading. All buddhas and all awakened ancestors have offered a clear way to practice, straightforward and simple, available to all, since wholehearted practice and joyful verification of reality are indivisible. Arrange the body in a comfortable posture, sitting upright, relaxed and still, with eyes open and breath settled below the navel. Remember how rare it is to receive the pivotal opportunity of human life, with the precious gift of freedom to practice, and how this chance is quickly slipping away. Remember that the effect of every present thought and action ripples out endlessly, determining your future destiny, and that following along unsatisfying habitual ruts only deepens them further. Resolve to rely on the ever-present all-pervading brightness of ordinary mind, your original face, and resolve to share your practice and verification with everyone you meet, the greatest gift you can ever offer.

Without wasting time, immediately step back from fascination with the flow of changing experiences, and turn the light of awareness around by sincerely inquiring if awareness itself is present here and now. It cannot be grasped as another experience, as it's not anything at all, and yet it's undeniably and vividly shining in the midst of every experience. What is experiencing this present experience of sight, sound, bodily sensation, or thought? While sitting silently, thoroughly investigate this bright empty space in which all sights, sounds, sensations, and thoughts arise and cease, without attending to the content of these experiences. Without trying to eliminate thoughts, let their ever-changing stories recede to the background, and be wholeheartedly interested in the unchanging brightness of ordinary mind, neither inside nor outside. What is it that knows that awareness is present? There is no subjective observer here, peering in from the sidelines, only unlocated self-knowing awareness being aware of itself by being itself. The practice of such inquiry is simultaneously the verification of your original face. You are not it, in truth it is you.

Without passively resting in this magical city of tranquility and peace, for the benefit of all beings, thoroughly investigate further. From this new vista of abiding as ordinary mind itself, now turn back to the sights and sounds, sensations and thoughts, and look: are these experiences something other than experiencing, are they something in addition to awareness itself? Everything that appears within the open space of awareness cannot be found as anything but a manifestation of awareness, its perfect expression, the radiant light of knowing taking the form of sights and sounds, the activity of sensations and thoughts. Knowing without touching things, the light is itself walls, tiles, and pebbles, the hundred grasses and the front gate. Mind itself is buddha, timeless and boundless, ungraspable and impersonal, imperturbable and unimpeded, effortless and fulfilled, uncontrived kindness and compassion, since self and others are nondual. The all-inclusive true body of brightness is unceasing self-enjoyment, the jewel mirror inseparable from its images, boundless space excluding nothing, the lucid dream of self and other appearing within one mind, the gracious host serving all guests impartially, the simultaneous practice and verification of unborn suchness. Within this relaxed fresh confidence, free from grasper and grasped, just sit. May all awakened beings extend their true compassion to help you not obscure this presence, not turning away or touching it throughout day and night, and help you to not be distracted by whatever has nothing to do with this. May the joyful ease that spontaneously accompanies this practice and verification be offered to all living beings caught in a self-spun web that temporarily seems to obscure ordinary mind. May all beings realize freedom and joy in the vast ocean of eternal brightness, as the treasure store naturally opens so all can use it freely.