

THE FUKAN-ZAZENGI
A UNIVERSAL RECOMMENDATION FOR ZAZEN
(Daigaku Rummé Translation)

Now, when you seek the Way, you find it to be universal and complete. How, then, can it be contingent upon practice and enlightenment? The Dharma vehicle is free and unrestricted. What need is there for concentrated effort? Indeed, the whole body of reality is far beyond the world's dust. Who can believe in a means to brush it clean?

The Way is complete and present right where you are. What is the use, then, of practice? And yet, if there is the slightest difference between you and the Way, the separation will be greater than that between heaven and earth. If the least like or dislike arises, the mind is lost in confusion.

Even if you are proud of your understanding and think you are richly endowed with enlightenment and have glimpsed the wisdom that pervades all things; even if you think you have attained the Way, clarified the mind, and gained the power to touch the heavens, you are still only wandering about the frontiers of enlightenment. In fact, you have almost lost the Way of total liberation.

You must take note of the fact that even Shakyamuni Buddha had to sit in zazen for six years. The influence of those six years of upright sitting is still apparent. Also, Bodhidharma's transmission of the Buddhadharma and the fame of his nine years of practicing zazen facing a wall are celebrated to this day. The ancient sages were this diligent in their practice, so how can people today dispense with the practice of zazen?

You should therefore cease from practice based on intellectual understanding and the pursuit of words and letters. Learn the backward step that turns the light inward to illuminate the Self. Body and mind will drop away by themselves, and the essential Self will be manifest. If you wish to attain "suchness," practice "suchness" immediately.

For zazen, a quiet room is best. Eat and drink moderately. Give up all deluding relationships and set everything aside. Do not think of good or bad, right or wrong. Do not interfere with the workings of the mind, nor try to control the movements of

your thoughts. Give up the idea of becoming a buddha. Zazen has nothing whatsoever to do with whether you are sitting upright or lying down.

Usually a thick square mat is placed on the floor where you sit and a round cushion put on top of it. Sit either in the full- or half-lotus position. In the full-lotus position, first place your right foot on your left thigh and your left foot on your right thigh. In the half-lotus, you simply put your left foot on your right thigh. Your clothing should be loose, but neat. Then place your right hand, palm up, on your leg and your left hand, palm up, on your right palm, with the tips of the thumbs lightly touching. Sit upright, leaning neither to the left nor to the right, neither forward nor backward. Be sure your ears are in line with your shoulders and your nose is in line with your navel. Your tongue should be placed against the roof of your mouth, with lips and teeth firmly closed. Your eyes should always remain open. Breathe gently through your nose. Having adjusted your posture, take a deep breath. Sway your body to the left and right, then settle into a steady, immobile position, sitting like a mountain. Think of not thinking. How is this done! By leaving thinking as-it-is. This is the essential art of zazen.

The zazen I speak of is not "step-by-step, learning Zen." It is simply the Dharma gate of comfort and ease. It is the culmination of totally realized enlightenment. It is the manifestation of ultimate reality. Traps and snares can never interfere with it. If you attain this, you are like a dragon that has reached water or a tiger that reclines on a mountain. The true Dharma then appears of itself, and you will be free of dullness and distraction.

When you rise from sitting, stand up slowly and calmly. Do not rise abruptly.

Through the power of zazen it is possible to transcend delusion and enlightenment and attain the ability to die while sitting or standing. However, it is impossible for our discriminating mind to understand how the buddhas and enlightened ones bring about enlightenment through the opportunity provided by a finger, a pole, a needle, or a mallet. Or how they have transmitted the Way with a fly whisk, a fist, a staff, or a shout. Neither can it be fully understood through

supernatural powers. These actions are beyond the dualistic realm of subjective and objective. Is it not a principle that precedes knowledge and perceptions!

Therefore, no distinction should be made between whether a person is clever or stupid, superior or inferior. When you practice single-mindedly, that in itself is truly the practice of the Way. Practice and realization are naturally undefiled. Making an effort to attain the Way is itself the manifestation of the Way in your daily life.

All people throughout the world are without doubt equally imprinted with buddha-nature. However, without the practice of zazen, the true nature and function of a person will not be manifested. You should therefore devote yourself exclusively to and be completely absorbed in the practice of zazen. Although it is said that there are as many minds as there are people, all people should practice the Way, which is nothing other than the study of the Self. There is no reason to forsake the place you sit at home and go aimlessly off to the dusty regions of other countries. If you make one false step, you stray from the Way that lies directly before you.

You have already been blessed with a human form, which is vital, so do not use your time in vain. You are endowed with the essential functioning of the Way of Buddha, so why pursue worthless pleasures, which are like sparks from a flint stone! Our bodies are like dew on the grass. Our lives are like a flash of lightning, gone in an instant, vanished in a moment.

Honored practitioners of Zen, do not be afraid of the real dragon (zazen) or spend a long time touching only one part of the elephant. Devote yourselves to the Way, which points directly to the absolute. Respect those who have gone beyond all learning and have nothing left to do. Be in accord with the enlightenment of the buddhas and succeed to the samadhi of the enlightened ones who have transmitted the Dharma. Practice constantly in this manner and you are assured of becoming like them. The treasure house will open of itself, and you will be able to use it at will.