



The kaisando
altar at
Tassajara

UNDERSTANDING ORDINARY MIND IS BUDDHA

Shunryu Suzuki Roshi
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The point of my talk is just to give you some help in your practice. So it is just help. As I always say, there is no need for you to remember what I said as something definite. I'm just trying to help you, so it is just a support for your practice. If you stick to it, it means that you stick to the support. It is not the tree itself. When the tree is not strong enough, it may want some support. But most important is the tree itself, not the support.

I am one tree and each one of you is a tree. And by yourself you should stand up. When a tree stands up by itself, we call that tree a Buddha. In other words, when you practice zazen in its true sense, you are really Buddha. So Buddha and tree is one, in that sense. It may be that sometimes we call it a tree; sometimes we call it a Buddha. Buddha, or tree, or you, are the various names of one Buddha.

When you sit, you are independent of various beings and you are also related to various beings. When you have perfect composure in your practice, it means you include everything; you are not just you. You are the whole world or the whole cosmos, and you are a Buddha. So when you sit, you are ordinary mind and you are Buddha. Before you sit, you may stick to the idea of you or the idea of self: that is fear; or ordinary mind. But when you sit, you are both ordinary mind and Buddha. So when you

sit, you are not the same being as before you sit. Do you understand? Because when you sit, both you and ordinary mind are Buddha. You may say it is not possible to be both ordinary and holy. You may think so. If you think so, your understanding is, we say, heretical understanding or one-sided understanding.

We should understand everything both ways, not just from one standpoint. We call someone who understands things from just one side, "*tambancan*". *Tambancan* in Japanese means a man who carries a board on his shoulder. Because he carries a big board on his shoulder, it blocks his view and he cannot see the other side. Almost everyone is carrying a big board and cannot see the other side. He thinks he is just ordinary mind; but if he takes down the board, he will understand. He may say, "Oh, I am Buddha too. To be a Buddha with ordinary mind? It's amazing!" That is enlightenment.

So when you experience enlightenment, or when you are enlightened, you will understand things more freely. You won't mind whatever people call you. "Ordinary mind." "Okay, I am ordinary mind." "You are Buddha." "Yes, I am Buddha." How can you be Buddha and also ordinary mind? "I don't know, but actually I am Buddha and also ordinary mind." It doesn't matter. Whatever they say, that is alright.

The Buddha, in its true sense, is not different from ordinary mind. So ordinary mind, in its true sense, is not someone who is unholy or who is not Buddha. This is a complete understanding of our self. When we practice *zazen* with this understanding, that is true *zazen*; you will not be bothered by anything. Whatever you hear, whatever you see . . . that is okay. But in order to have this actual feeling, it is necessary to be accustomed to our practice. Intellectually, we may understand ourselves; but if we haven't the actual feeling along with it, then it is not so perfect. So that is why you must keep up your practice. If you keep practicing this way, then naturally you will have this understanding and this actual feeling, too.

Even though we can explain what Buddhism is, if someone does not have the actual feeling along with it, you cannot call that person a real Buddhist. Only when your personality is characterized by this kind of feeling can you be called a Buddhist. It is necessary for us to be always concentrated on this. There are many koans and sayings on this point. And although those sayings differ, they are actually all the same. Ordinary mind is dual, so even though we are doing quite usual things, whenever we do something, that is actually Buddha's activity. Buddha's activity and our activity are not different.

Someone may say that our activity originated from or is based on Buddha's mind—that such and such is Buddha's mind, and such and such is

ordinary mind. You may have various explanations, but there is no need to explain in that way. Whatever we do, we cannot say, "I am doing something," because there is no one who is independent from all others. When we say something, we make a sound. What is the sound? When I say something, you are hearing it. So I cannot do anything just by myself, or just for myself. I cannot say that I alone am doing something. If someone does something, everyone is included. So there is no explanation needed actually. Moment after moment we should continue this kind of activity, which is Buddha's activity. But you cannot say this is just Buddha's activity, because it is you who are doing it, actually. You may say, "I don't know who is doing what." But when you say that you limit your activity. You want to intellectualize your activity, but before you say something, the actual activity is here. That is actually who we are. We are Buddha and we are each one of us.

Our activity is both cosmic activity and personal activity. There is no need to explain what we are doing. When you want to explain it, that is alright; but because it is impossible to understand it, you should not feel uneasy. Actually you are here. Right here. So before you understand yourself, you are you. After you understand, you are not you anymore. But usually you stick to the you which is not you, and you ignore the reality. You feel uneasy with the reality, and you feel some satisfaction which is not real. As Dogen Zenji said: "We human beings attach to something which is not real and forget all about that which is real." That is actually what we are doing. If you realize this point, you will have perfect composure in yourself, and you can trust yourself. Whatever happens to you, it doesn't matter, you can trust yourself.

That belief, or that trust, is not usual trust or usual belief in something which is not real. When you are able to sit without any image or any sound, with open mind, that is true practice, and that you can do it means that you have absolute freedom from everything.

Our life is momentary, and at the same time, each moment includes its own past and future. In this way, our momentary and eternal life will continue. This is actually how we live our everyday life and how we get freedom from various difficulties, how to not suffer from difficulties and how to enjoy our life moment after moment. That is our practice based on true understanding.

I was sick in bed for a long time and I was thinking about these things. I am just practicing zazen in bed. I should enjoy my bed. (Laughing) Sometimes it was difficult but . . . (laughing) if it was difficult I laughed at myself. "Why is it so difficult? Why don't you enjoy your difficulties?"

That is, I think, our practice. Thank you very much.