



*Suzuki Roshi  
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## *Both Buddha and Ordinary*

*BY Shunryu Suzuki Roshi*

**T**HE POINT OF MY TALK is just to give you some support for your practice. There is no need for you to remember what I say. If you stick to it, it means that you stick to the support, not the tree itself. A tree, when it is strong enough, may still want some support. But the most important thing is the tree itself, not the support.

I am one tree, and each one of you is a tree. You should stand up by yourself. 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 the tree are one. Sometimes we call it a tree and sometimes we call it a Buddha. "Buddha," "tree," or "you" are many names of one Buddha.

When you sit, you are independent from various beings, and you are related to various beings. And when you have perfect composure in your practice, it means that 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 that you are ordinary. So when you sit you are not the same being as you are before you sit. Do you understand?

You may say that it is not possible to be ordinary and holy. You may think that. When you think this way, your understanding is one-sided. We call someone who understands things from just one side a *tamban-kan*, someone who carries a board on his shoulder. Because you carry a big board on your shoulder, you cannot see the other side. You think you are just the ordinary mind, but, if you take the board off, you will understand, "Oh, I am Buddha, too. How can I be both 'Buddha' and 'ordinary mind?' It is amazing!" That is enlightenment.

When you experience enlightenment, you will understand things more freely. You won't mind whatever people call you. Ordinary mind? Okay, I am ordinary mind. Buddha? Yes, I am Buddha. How do I come to be both "Buddha" and "ordinary mind?" I don't know, but actually I am "Buddha" and "ordinary mind."

Buddha, in its true sense, is not different from ordinary mind. And ordinary mind, in its true sense, is not something apart from what is holy. This is a complete understanding of ourself. When we practice zazen with this understanding, that is true zazen. We will not be bothered by anything. Whatever you hear, whatever you see, that will be okay. To have this kind of feeling, it is necessary to become accustomed to our practice. If you keep practicing our way, you will naturally have this understanding and this feeling. It will not be just intellectual. You will have the actual feeling.

Even though someone can explain what Buddhism is, if he does not have the actual feeling, we cannot call him a real Buddhist. Only when your personality is characterized by this kind of feeling can we call you a Buddhist. The way we can become characterized by this kind of understanding is to be always concentrated on this point. How to be concentrated on this point is rather difficult to explain. Many koans and sayings bring out this point. Ordinary mind is tao. Even though we are doing quite usual things, whenever we do something, that is actually Buddha's activity. Buddha's mind, Buddha's activity, and our activity are not different.

Someone may say our activity is based on Buddha's mind, that "such and such" is Buddha's mind, and "so and so" is ordinary mind, but there is no need to explain it in that way. When we do something, we cannot say, "I am doing something," because there is no one who is independent from the others. When I say something, you will hear it. I cannot do anything by myself, just for myself. If someone does something, everyone will be doing something. Moment after moment, we continue this kind of activity, which is Buddha's activity. But you cannot say that this is just Buddha's activity, because you are actually doing something too. You may say "I," then, but we don't know what "I" that

is. The reason you try to say "who is doing what" is that you want to intellectualize your activity. But before you say anything, the actual activity is here. Who you are is here.

Although our activity is cosmic activity and personal activity, there is no need to explain what we are doing. We may want to explain it, but we should not feel uneasy if we cannot, because it is impossible to understand. Actually, you are here, right here. So, before you understand yourself, you are you. After you explain, you are not really you anymore. You have an image. But usually you will stick to the one who is not you, and you will ignore the reality. As Dogen Zenji said, we human beings attach to something which is not real and forget all about what 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 trust is not the usual trust or the usual belief in what is not real. So when you are able to sit without any image or any sound, with an open mind, that is true practice. When you can do that, you are free from everything.

Still it is all right for you to enjoy your life, moment after moment, because you are not enjoying your life as something concrete and eternal. 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 how we actually live our everyday life, how we enjoy our everyday life, and how we get freedom from various difficulties.

I was in bed for a long time, and I was thinking about these things. I was 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.