

Dogen. Zazen-gi

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Moon in a Dewdrop

WRITINGS OF

Zen Master Dogen

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Rules for Zazen

ZAZEN-GI

1

Practicing Zen is zazen. For zazen a quiet place is suitable. Lay out a thick mat. Do not let in drafts or smoke, rain or dew. Protect and maintain the place where you settle your body. There are examples from the past of sitting on a diamond seat* and sitting on a flat stone covered with a thick layer of grass.

Day or night the place of sitting should not be dark; it should be kept warm in winter and cool in summer.

2

Set aside all involvements and let the myriad things rest. 2 Zazen is not thinking of good, not thinking of bad. It is not conscious endeavor. • It is not introspection.

Do not desire to become a buddha; 3 let sitting* or lying down drop away. Be moderate in eating and drinking. Be mindful of the passing of time, and engage yourself in zazen as though saving your head from fire. On Mt. Huangmei the Fifth Ancestor practiced zazen to the exclusion of all other activities.

PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS

30

3

When sitting zazen, wear the kashäya• and use a round cushion. The cushion should not be placed all the way under the legs, but only under the buttocks. In this way the crossed legs rest on the mat and the backbone is supported with the round cushion. This is the method used by all buddha ancestors* for zazen.

Sit either in the half-lotus position or in the full-lotus position. For the full-lotus put the right foot on the left thigh and the left foot on the right thigh. The toes should lie along the thighs, not extending beyond. For the half-lotus position, simply put the left foot on the right thigh.

4

Loosen your robes and arrange them in an orderly way. Place the right hand on the left foot and the left hand on the right hand, lightly touching the ends of the thumbs together. With the hands in this position, place them next to the body so that the joined thumb-tips are at the navel.

Straighten your body and sit erect. Do not lean to the left or right; do not bend forward or backward. Your ears should be in line with your shoulders, and your nose in line with your navel.

Rest your tongue against the roof of your mouth, and breathe through your nose. Lips and teeth should be closed. Eyes should be open, neither too wide, nor too narrow. Having adjusted body and mind in this manner, take a breath and exhale fully.

Sit solidly in samādhi* and think not-thinking. * How do you think not-thinking? Nonthinking. This is the art of zazen.

Zazen is not learning to do concentration. It is the dharma gate* of great ease and joy. It is undefiled practice-enlightenment. *

In the eleventh month, first year of Kangen [1243], this was taught to the assembly at Yoshimine Monastery, Yoshida County, Echizen Province.

Translated by Dan Welch and Kazuaki Tanahashi