

# **In Praise of Zazen**

*by Hakuin Ekaku*

Sentient beings are in essence buddhas.  
It is like water and ice.

There is no ice without water:  
There are no buddhas outside of sentient beings.

What a shame, sentient beings seek afar,  
Not knowing what is at hand.

It is like wailing from thirst  
In the midst of water

Or wandering lost among the poor,  
Although born a rich family's child.

The cause of rebirth in the six realms  
Is the darkness of our delusion.

Treading one dark path after another,  
When can we escape birth and death?

Mahāyāna Zen meditation  
Goes beyond all praise.

Giving, keeping precepts, and the other realizations,  
Chanting Buddha's name, repentance, training, and

Many other kinds of wholesome deeds  
All find their source in zazen.

When you sit even once,  
The merit obliterates countless wrongdoings.

How can there be unwholesome realms?  
The Pure Land is not far.

If, by good fortune, you have the occasion  
To hear this teaching,

Admire it, and rejoice in it,  
You will attain limitless happiness.  
How much more if you dedicate yourself  
And realize your own nature directly.

This own-nature is no nature.  
You are already apart from useless discussions.

The gate opens where cause and effect are inseparable.  
The road of not-two, not-three goes straight ahead.

Make the form formless form,  
Going and returning, not anywhere else.

Make the thought thoughtless thought,  
Singing and dancing, the dharma voice.

How vast the sky of unobstructed concentration!  
How brilliant the moon of four wisdoms!

At this very moment, what can be sought?  
Nirvāna is immediate.

This place is the lotus land.  
This body is the buddha body.

*Translation by Kazuaki Tanahashi*