

*Talk on Wholehearted Practice of the Way:
A Translation of Eihei Dōgen Bendōwa*

All buddha-tathagatas together have been simply transmitting wondrous dharma and actualizing anuttara samyak sambodhi for which there is an unsurpassable, unfabricated, wondrous method.¹ This wondrous dharma, which has been transmitted only from buddha to buddha without deviation, has as its criterion jijuyū zanmai.²

For disporting oneself freely in this samadhi, practicing zazen in an upright posture is the true gate.³ Although this dharma is abundantly inherent in each person, it is not manifested without practice, it is not attained without realization. "When you let go, the dharma fills your hands; it is not within the boundary of one or many. "When you try to speak, it fills your mouth; it is not limited to vertical or horizontal.⁴ Buddhas continuously dwell in and maintain this dharma, yet no trace of conceptualization remains. Living beings constantly function in and use this dharma, yet it does not appear in their perception.

The wholehearted practice of the Way that I am talking about allows all things to exist in enlightenment and enables us to live out oneness in the path of emancipation. "When we break through the barrier and drop off all limitations, we are no longer concerned with conceptual distinctions.

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For all ancestors and buddhas who have been dwelling in and maintaining buddha-dharma, practicing upright sitting in jijuyū zanmai is the true path for opening up enlightenment.¹⁵ Both in India and in China, those who have attained enlightenment have followed this way.

This is because each teacher and each disciple has been intimately and correctly transmitting this subtle method and receiving and maintaining its true spirit.

According to the unmistakably handed down tradition, the straightforward buddha-dharma that has been simply transmitted is supreme among the supreme. From the time you begin practicing with a teacher, the practices of incense burning, bowing, nembutsu, repentance, and reading sutras are not at all essential; just sit, dropping off body and mind.¹⁶

When one displays the buddha mudra with one's whole body and mind, sitting upright in this samadhi even for a short time, everything in the entire dharma world becomes buddha mudra, and all space in the universe completely becomes enlightenment.¹⁷ Therefore, it enables buddha-tathagatas to increase the dharma joy of their own original grounds and renew the adornment of the way of awakening. Simultaneously, all living beings of the dharma world in the ten directions and six realms become clear and pure in body and mind, realize great emancipation, and their own original face appears. At that time, all things together awaken to supreme enlightenment and utilize buddha-body, immediately go beyond the culmination of awakening, and sit upright under the kingly bodhi tree.¹⁸ At the same time, they turn the incomparable, great dharma wheel and begin expressing ultimate and unfabricated profound prajna.

There is a path through which the anuttara samyak sambodhi of all things returns [to the person in zazen], and whereby [that person and the enlightenment of all things] intimately and imperceptibly assist each other. Therefore this zazen person without fail drops off body and mind, cuts away previous tainted views and thoughts, awakens genuine buddha-dharma, universally helps the buddha work in each place, as

numerous as atoms, where buddha-tathagatas teach and practice, and widely influences practitioners who are going beyond buddha, thereby vigorously exalting the dharma that goes beyond buddha.¹⁹ At this time, because earth, grasses and trees, fences and walls, tiles and pebbles, all things in the dharma realm in ten directions, carry out buddha work, therefore everyone receives the benefit of wind and water movement caused by this functioning, and all are imperceptibly helped by the wondrous and incomprehensible influence of buddha to actualize the enlightenment at hand. Since those who receive and use this water and fire extend the buddha influence of original enlightenment, all who live and talk with these people also share and universally unfold the boundless buddha virtue and they circulate the inexhaustible, ceaseless, incomprehensible, and immeasurable buddha dharma within and without the whole dharma world. However, these various [mutual influences] do not mix into the perceptions of this person sitting, because they take place within stillness without any fabrication, and they are enlightenment itself. If practice and enlightenment were separate as people commonly believe, it would be possible for them to perceive each other.²⁰ But that which is associated with perceptions cannot be the standard of enlightenment because deluded human sentiment cannot reach the standard of enlightenment.

Moreover, although both mind and object appear and disappear within stillness, because this takes place in the realm of self-receiving and self-employing (*jijuyū*) without moving a speck of dust or destroying a single form, extensive buddha work and profound, subtle buddha influence are carried out.²¹ The grass, trees, and earth affected by this functioning radiate great brilliance together and endlessly expound the deep, wondrous dharma. Grasses and trees, fences and walls demonstrate and exalt it for the sake of living beings, both ordinary and sage; and in turn, living beings, both ordinary and sage, express and

unfold it for the sake of grasses and trees, fences and walls. The realm of self-awakening and awakening others is fundamentally endowed with the quality of enlightenment with nothing lacking, and allows the standard of enlightenment to be actualized ceaselessly.

Therefore, even if only one person sits for a short time, because this zazen is one with all existence and completely permeates all time, it performs everlasting buddha guidance within the inexhaustible dharma world in the past, present, and future. [Zazen] is equally the same practice and the same enlightenment for both the person sitting and for all dharmas.²² The melodious sound continues to resonate as it echoes, not only during sitting practice, but before and after striking *sunyata*, which continues endlessly before and after a hammer hits it.²³ Not only that, but all things are endowed with original practice within the original face, which is impossible to measure.

You should know that even if all the buddhas in the ten directions, as numerous as the sands of the Ganges River, together engage the full power of their buddha wisdom, they could never reach the limit, or measure or comprehend the virtue, of one person's zazen.