

Here we are already well into this sesshin. You are walking this one step, patiently making this one step. You already know what I am going to talk to you about. It is already your intention to practice in the true spirit of practice. But intention is not enough. You have to walk the walk. You must become your practice. You must be this one doing. You must decidedly be THIS. Decided. It is your practice and yours alone.

There are three points which are the essential for zazen practice. All the great practitioners from times of old have stressed the necessity of the three basic elements for zen practice. The very first essential element for practice. Are you quite clear on it? The roots of great belief. Deep belief. Firmly rooted. Absolutely established. The great roots of belief. What belief? You know it - you are aware of it, but if your faith is not clear ...if your belief is even slightly lax or slack, it is not the firmly established roots of great belief. Belief in original Buddha nature. The truth which Shakyamuni, the world honoured one, affirmed through personal experience. It is the first great step, the Buddha dharma step, it is your step, your first step. Wonderful. Wonderful. Wonder of wonders. All beings are Buddha endowed with Buddha virtue, Buddha wisdom. All being. All being arises dependent upon causes and conditions and each one thing, one being, born of causes and conditions, each and every one is –as it is – Buddha. Buddha virtue. Buddha wisdom. Deep and unwavering belief in essential Buddha nature. What's more a belief so established that we say the roots are such that if they become shallow, exposed they rot. Roots must be grounded firmly in the great earth. The roots of your belief must not be superficial, weak, exposed, easily shifting. Your belief is deeply, firmly rooted. You alone are solely responsible for your practice. It is solely your practice. You are One – Alone. The universe – One Being. One. The truth is solely One – original Buddha nature – One. The truth. Oneness. Only Buddha nature – your reality. If you are on and off again in your belief.. mixed.. half baked.. there is Buddha nature .. there is not buddha nature.. buddha nature must be that over there.. or if you are just trying it on for size.. so to speak .. sizing it up just in case.. this is not true, of course, to the reality of original Buddha nature – absolute Buddha nature. All beings are Buddha. Buddha virtue. Buddha wisdom. Absolute. Absolute, of course, is not to say human beings only. All. All. All Being. The roots of great belief. If there is uncertainty, “I understand”, “I don't understand” “I see”, “I don't see” – we can't call that roots of great belief. If your belief is unsteady, exposed to the winds of change, it will easily decay and suddenly be overcome. You'll find yourself off track. So deep rooted faith – this is the first essential for zen practice. If your belief is sound, the second and third essentials – great doubt, great determination - will surely, certainly come to light. Strong, solid roots .. practice of great belief. You are supported. Your practice is supported by the roots of deep belief. The way is perfect like unto vast space – there isn't so much as a single hair out of place. The way, is as it is now, perfectly reliable. Buddha virtue, Buddha wisdom is all pervading. Any -and everywhere, any time, always, Now-Here. In reality, the reality of your being is not troubled, not somehow off balance, not alienated. So why do you feel truth to be so distant, so separate, something you have reach out and try to get? As long as you perceive

yourself to be alienated from reality, there will be –as the old saying goes – one joy to a thousand sorrows. Until you have realized your true nature, the time of tranquillity that you enjoy now and again is followed by times of restlessness, unease, dissatisfaction – up and down. But all beings rigidly encased in “me”, up and down, troubled. All beings are lovely children of Buddha, children of the Buddhas and ancestors who have already come alive to inherent truth. All beings are my lovely children. You must be able to awaken to this reality and to live it out. You must be able to be HERE for all beings, to be of service, to nurture and protect, all those who suffer. That’s what you are here for, isn’t it? You are already on the path – the right path. But you must determine again, still again, to really get with it. Determine not to idle away t even one breath [during] this precious sesshin. The roots of great belief established. This equals the practice of the roots of great belief. Where there is deep belief there is practice of that belief. There is only for you to stay with it – to do this practice -Original Buddha nature. All the universe is the great way. Perfect like space – nothing is lacking, nothing is in excess. The way is perfect like vast with nothing in excess, nothing lacking. The roots of great belief established. The way Now-Here, not distant, not separate. You have jumped into this sesshin starting out in the right spirit. I urge you to continue your practice with enthusiasm, with energy. If Buddha nature still appears to depend upon conditions, you can only say to yourself “not yet”, “not yet”.

Here is where great doubt, the second essential, comes in. Of course your belief in Buddha nature is not in doubt. In fact, belief in Buddha nature is so certain, that you cannot help but ask, “Why does it not appear clearly to me?” You have taken this question, this problem, upon yourself. It is your driving question, is it not? How relentlessly can you pursue this problem? How great is your doubt? Pursuing it off again and on again is not enough. You must be single minded. You must not be thrown off the track by “this” and “that”, that happens and occurs. You must not waste even a breath of this precious sesshin.

This is where the third essential comes in ... great determination. Driving determination. It arises from your belief in essential Buddha nature – in your own reality. It too is great - great determination, energy. It does not permit you to falter. Buddha Nature. Buddha Nature. Its not just words and you are not just an onlooker. Your reality, your present reality, is the reality of the universe. One truth. One sole truth.

The three keys to practice are in your hands. The roots of great belief, great doubt, great determination. Please! Please! Carry on in earnest. Poor heart and soul into this one breath, this one doing – shitante. Doing, just this one doing. Shitante. Dokusan will help you if your faith is faltering. I pray that everything may come together to help concentrate your belief, to focus and establish more firmly the roots of great belief. How? Do this one doing– shitante. You are One – alone. One. Just sitting. Truth is One. You are blessed with this opportunity to sit zazen. Please, give your attention to this one doing –to THIS...

Together with all beings we attain the Buddha way.