

STILLNESS IN ACTION

STILLNESS in the midst of action is the fundamental principle of Zazen (sitting in meditation). Some people think of Zazen as a sort of monopoly of the Zen sect, but the sect certainly has no monopoly of it. Zazen is the basis of the universe. Heaven and earth sit in meditation, every object sits in meditation. Knowing nothing of the Zen sect, all things are performing their meditation.

What is called Zazen means to live at peace in the true basis of the universe, which is stillness. Movement is a secondary attribution: stillness is the real condition. Out of stillness comes all activity.

For instance, the water of the ocean, when disturbance of wind ceases, at once goes back to the state of calm; the grass and trees, when the cause of agitation dies away, become as it were calm. These things always return to rest in the stillness which is their true nature. And this is the principle of Zazen. In nature there are day and night; when the sun sets gradually there is a hush, until what is called the dead of night when all is still as if a current of water had ceased to flow. This is Zazen of nature.

As with everything else, so with man. Working by day, we sleep at night. Falling into deep sleep, men forget the existence of self and are absolutely at rest. This is a state of what is called in Zazen 'body and mind loosed and dropped away'. In nature the counterpart of the restless action of day is the absolute stillness of night, and to abide in that is the principle of Zazen. In this sense everything naturally practises Zazen.

I may know nothing of Zazen, yet if I know what it is to sleep in bodily and mental relaxation then all unconsciously the benefits of Zazen rain upon me.

The Zazen of the Zen sect is to seek this way of stillness in the midst of activity. The method is to bring to stillness the mental activities, based on illusion, and conform to the stillness which is the fundamental nature of the mind.

When it is attained in Zazen, the result is called Satori or realization. Zazen is practice of infinity, conforming to the infinity which is the principle of the universe.