

## THE THREE MINDS

In his *Instructions for the Tenzo*, Dogen emphasizes the three minds or attitudes that must be maintained in every practitioner: magnanimous mind, parental mind, and joyful mind. The most essential or fundamental of these three is *magnanimous mind*, or *great mind*, Dogen describes it this way in his *Tenzo Kyokun*:

*So-called great mind is, in its spirit, like a great mountain or a great sea: it has no partiality and no factionalism. Lifting an ounce, it does not consider it light' hefting a stone, it does not consider it heavy...It views pennyweights and ounces of silver within the context of a single system of measurement. As an emblem of this sameness, we can write the character "great."*

The Japanese character for “great” should not be understood as comparatively bigger than something else; that would limit its scope. If your mind is related to something outside itself, it is small mind. Instead we should understand “great” as that which contains all things; it is the “mind that exhausts all of the world in the ten directions.”

We make contact with this mind when we let go of our thoughts, and return to the simple awareness of ourselves. When we let go of our thoughts and discriminations, when we stop thinking in terms of big and small, right and wrong, good and evil, heaven and hell, and so on, we are left with the fundamental interconnectedness of all things—we are left with our *true self* or *great mind*. In his *Instructions*, Dogen says “Having a magnanimous mind means being unprejudiced and refusing to take sides.” In *Fukanzazengi*, he says that *Zazen* is a dropping off of all relationships. So for Dogen, *Zazen* is *magnanimous mind*.

When we experience *big mind* we are able to live our lives to the fullest by accepting everything that is, without limitations of any kind. There is no superior or inferior, good circumstance or bad. Thus, we are able to handle whatever comes our way with a deep sense of equanimity. This is very important. If we find ourselves in Hell, we don't dream of getting out and going to heaven—we just meet whatever we encounter with wholehearted mind and body, without any partiality or prejudice. We just accept what is, whatever is, as the expression of the life force of the universe. To judge it one way or another is to add something extra. Our practice is not to add anything. When we sit, we just sit. When we cook, we just cook.

Dogen says that the *Tenzo* often receives a lots of complaints about the food—the ingredients may be too plain or the portions may be too small or too large—but if he

has *big mind*, he is able to accept it wholeheartedly. Suzuki roshi once said that the Tenzo must accept all the complaints he or she receives with a smile. But, after pausing for a moment, he added that you must not smile too much or the monks might get even more angry. Because *big mind* is the full embodiment of human nature, it understands every aspect of our psyches.

In *magnanimous mind*, the boundlessness and limitlessness of our Self that is fundamentally interconnected with all things. That is, we see the entire universe in ourselves. We see eternity in each moment and experience heaven and earth in each breath. In “Only a Buddha and Buddha” from the *Shobogenzo*, Dogen says “The practice of Buddha takes place in the company of the entire great earth and all sentient beings. Practice that does not exhaust all is not that of Buddha.” We need to experience what Dogen is talking about in our Zazen. If we do this we will be able to live our lives in accordance with the entire earth and all beings. Our vow is to make this the direction of our lives.

But we should not be deluded in thinking that we are already the Great Self that includes all things. We need to see that our ordinary, conditioned, sense of “I,” our life story, is not that Self; it is not our original nature. In the West, we have the idea of microcosm, which is expressed in statements such as, “God created man in His own image.” But what is often overlooked is that we are not yet *that person*. Or to put in the way that we are taught in Soto Zen, we need to see that we are that person, but we are not yet aware of it; our delusions cover up who we really are. So we recite in every one of our ceremonies, “Delusions are inexhaustible, I vow to end them.”

In “Mind is Buddha,” Dogen says, “The mind which has been correctly transmitted is the one mind which is identical to all the dharmas, the dharmas which are all the one mind...” That is, there is nothing outside *great mind*—not the heavens or the earth—it contains all things. From the point of view of *great mind*, everything we encounter is our life. As Suzuki Roshi put it, we see “all aspects of our life as the unfolding of *Big Mind*.”

If everything I meet is part of my life then it is only natural that I take great care with whatever I encounter. This attitude is *parental mind*, which sympathizes and empathizes with everything—not for its own sake but for others. In the *Lotus Sutra*, it says:

In this triple world,  
All is my domain;  
The living beings in it  
Are all my children.

In the *Tenzō Kyōkun*, Dogen applies parental mind to describe how we should handle the ingredients of our food: “The Tenzo must handle [the ingredients] as carefully as if they were his own eyes;” and “Both day and night, allow all things to come into and reside within your mind. Allow your mind and all things to function together as a whole.” We must devote our lives to each and everything we encounter in the same way as a parent does with her young child.

In the kitchen, the tenzo must take great care of the fruits and vegetables, even if they are not fresh or tasty. We must treat all ingredients as even handedly as we treat all beings. Here are a couple of old Japanese sayings: “See the pot as your own head; see the water as your lifeblood.” And, “Clean the chopsticks, ladles, and all other utensils’ handle them with equal care and awareness, putting everything back where it naturally belongs.” The Tenzo, that is, all of us, must take care of everything we encounter as if it were our child.

This attitude is only possible after we actualize our *great mind* and see things without differentiating between self and other. If you relate your mind to something outside itself that is small mind, but if your mind is not related to anything else, if it includes everything, that is Great Mind. It is only natural for us to take care of our life, but to really take care of the whole of our lives we must see that our lives contain everything that is, and we will treat everything we encounter as a mother tending to her child. Uchiyama Roshi says that we should view everyone and everything we meet as the scenery of our *big minds*.

The volitional attitude of our Zen practice is *joyful mind*. It is the joy that comes from deep in our hearts even in the midst of difficulty. We rejoice because we have the precious opportunity of being able to serve The Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha in every moment. Being born a human is precious, being born in a place where the Dharma flourishes is even more so. So before each Dharma talk, we chant:

*An unsurpassed, penetrating and perfect Dharma,  
Is rarely met with even in a hundred thousand million kalpas.  
Having it to see and listen to, to remember and accept,  
I vow to taste the truth of the Tathagatha's words*

A person is joyful when she is able to live her life according to Buddhadharma, when she sees her life as the unfolding of the Dharma. If everything she does supports her wish to become a Bodhisattva she becomes joyful. When the vow to live an awakened life, to save all beings, fills her life and informs whatever she does, she has a *joyful mind*. This is not an excessive joy or excitement; it is the imperturbable equanimity of an awakened life that experiences the world of birth and death as the world of nirvana.