



---

# *Reflections on Our Practice at Three Treasures Sangha*

## ***View of a Senior Student...***

Zen is a form of meditation. Meditation allows us to experience the stillness that is the ground of our being, our true self. As we experience the truth of who we are, we become more open to life. This openness allows us to live with equanimity and compassion. Meditation is a spiritual practice, a way of recognizing our inherent wholeness. It is an investigation, an acceptance and a celebration of who we are. The aims of meditation are development of concentration, a personal experience of the truth, and a personalization and actualization of our experience.

The heart of our practice is zazen—or seated meditation—and our model is the Buddha under the bodhi tree. Zazen has been shown to be a practical way to settle down to a place where realization is possible. The practice involves sitting still and forgetting the self by uniting with something, such as our breath, a theme, a koan or our daily activities. On this path we begin to realize that our ordinary daily activities are the place where our true self finds its full expression.

Although zazen is a practice that is familiar and joyful, there can be many pitfalls along the way: pain, fantasy, random thoughts, personal problems and self-doubt. Faith in the practice, an acceptance of ourselves and a deep determination to personally experience the truth can carry us through these pitfalls.

The Three Treasures Sangha has a history of ecumenical participation and one need not be a Buddhist to participate in the practice. Through zazen many people gain deep insight into their own religion. Described by Robert Aitken Roshi in *The Dragon Who Never Sleeps*, the Buddha's original teaching is essentially a matter of four points, referred to as the *Four Noble Truths*:

**ONE Anguish:** Anguish is everywhere.

**TWO Cause of Anguish:** We desire permanent existence for ourselves and for our loved ones, and we desire to prove ourselves independent of others and superior to them. These desires conflict with the way things are: nothing abides, and everything and everyone depends upon everything and everyone else. This conflict causes anguish, and we project our anguish on those we meet.

**THREE Cessation of Anguish:** Release from anguish comes with the personal acknowledgment and resolve that we are here together very briefly, so let us accept this reality fully and take care of one another while we can.

**FOUR Path:** This acknowledgment and resolve are realized by following the eightfold path: right views, right thinking, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right recollection and right meditation. Here *right* means *correct* or *accurate* in keeping with the reality of our impermanence and interdependence.

## ***Other Teachers' Thoughts***

*"The Zen path is devoted to clearing away self-centered delusions, attachments and concepts, and seeing into true nature. Zen involves realization and application of this realization in daily life."* Aitken Roshi

*"Zen is a way of surrender."* Joan Rieck

*"The real miracle is not to walk on water or in thin air, but to walk on earth."* Thich Nhat Hanh

*"If we take up zazen, then deep within we are doing so not to become Buddhas but to behave like the Buddhas we already are."* Ken Wilbur

*"The goal of Zen is perfection of character."* Yamada Roshi

*"All great religions embrace some measure of Zen."* Yasutani Roshi