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# Becoming Buddha

**Kusen by Roland Yuno Rech - Godinne, July 2019**

Master Baso practiced zazen for twenty years and received the transmission from Master Nangaku. But even after having received this transmission, he never neglected the practice of zazen, and he devoted himself to helping others to practice. When disciples came to him, he made them experience intimately the Buddha mind, the *hishiryo* consciousness of zazen, beyond all thought, beyond all discrimination.

In Master Dogen's time, many monks thought that zazen practice was a practice for beginners only, believing that once somebody had achieved Awakening, there was no need to practice zazen anymore.

One day when Master Baso was practicing in his master's dojo, the latter asked him: "Why do you sit in zazen for so long?" Baso replied: "It is because I wish to become Buddha", (in other words: "I wish to realize Awakening"). Then Master Nangaku took a tile and began to polish it. Baso asked him: "Master, why are you polishing this tile, what is your intention?" Master Nangaku answered: "I intend to make a mirror out of it". Baso then wondered: "How can you make a mirror by polishing a tile?" And Nangaku replied: "How can you become Buddha by practicing zazen?"

Zazen has nothing to do with becoming Buddha, because zazen itself is the realization of the Buddha state. In other words, we don't do zazen to realize Awakening, we practice zazen without aim, without intention, and this *mushotoku* zazen directly becomes the practice of enlightenment, becomes Buddha. The practice of zazen itself is Awakening and realization. It is not a technique that we use to obtain Awakening later, afterwards. It is here and now that Awakening is realized, in the practice itself, on the condition that we abandon ourselves totally to this practice and do not make it a kind of preliminary exercise.

Put all your energy into the practice of the posture and be totally that body-mind breathing in and out, never dwelling on anything... Then the dualistic functioning of the mind is abandoned. It is not a question of becoming Buddha, it is zazen itself that is Buddha.

Master Dogen tells this story to make us understand the profound meaning of our practice, which is beyond any sectarianism, because Baso and Nangaku belonged to the Rinzai lineage whereas Dogen belonged to the Soto lineage. Dogen often quoted the example of Rinzai monks, because for him the important thing was not the school but the practice itself. When the practice is right, i. e. *mushotoku*, without aim, without attachment to anything, this practice here and now is realization, is Buddha, is Awakening.

So, there is no point in expecting anything beyond zazen. Zazen is never a mean but a practice-realization, a practice which contains realization in itself. So, concentrate only on the practice and don't worry about becoming anything. What is important is only what is happening here and now. And when we let ourselves be totally absorbed by the practice itself, our ego is abandoned and we achieve the same Awakening than Shakyamuni Buddha.