

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
EVENING *SESSHIN* LECTURE
Monday, December 4, 1967
Tassajara

Our study—the more you—we study our way, the more it is difficult to explain it. But Dōgen-zenji thought there must be some way to make his descendent understand the true way. And he made a great effort to express this kind of subtle truth. In [*Fukan*] *Zazen-gi*—as in *Zazen-gi*, he says, "If there is slightest gap between the perfect enlightenment and practice, the difference will be heaven and earth." Because it should not be any gap between practice and enlightenment, or reality and seeming. We think whatever we see is—something we see is reality, but it is not so. And what we feel is reality, but it is not so. The reality and something which is observed by our six senses is one, you know. So what—what we see—just what we see is not true without background of the reality. I will stop [laughs] this kind of, you know, interpretation.

Dōgen-zenji found out a very good Chinese word to express this kind of truth. In Chinese—Chinese word [is] *inmo*¹—*inmo*—or I don't know—know this—how they pronounce it. But *inmo*—*inmo* has two meaning. One is positive meaning: "suchness," you know. The other is the interrogative meaning: "What is it?" [Laughs.] What—what is *inmo*? How is *inmo*? You know, what is it when geese [laughs] came? Horsemaster asked Hyakujō, "What is it?" That "what," you know, what is *inmo*. *Inmo* is interrogative, and it is affirmative too.

This is very convenient word to express the reality. Everything is one side—in one sense it is suchness. On the other hand, it is not—it is something in—it is something which we cannot grasp. For an instance, you know, here is beautiful flower, you know. You think here is beautiful flower, but that beautiful flower is always changing [laughs]. You cannot grasp it, even while you are watching the changes. So you think you see it, but actually you didn't see the flower itself which is changing.

So everything is in one side something which is—which cannot be grasped, so "What?" The—on the other hand, you know, even for a while it is there in that way. And so it is—everything is suchness, and everything is ingraspable—cannot be grasped. So it is "What?" So *inmo*—the word *inmo* has two meaning, and Dōgen-zenji found out this is very convenient word to express the reality.

¹ See Lecture SR-69-00-B for another discussion of *inmo*. "Inmo" is also the title of a fascicle in Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*.

Hashimoto-rōshi,² the authority of *Shōbōgenzō* who passed away two years ago, in his lecture he told me—he told us refer to the menu and dishes, you know. We you make, you know, a menu of the dishes, and we cook, you know, salad or eggs or meat—everything separately. That is, you know, suchness. Everything is arranged clearly, beautifully. But he says, "When you start to eat [laughs], everything will vanish in a moment." In ten minutes there is no more dish, no more food on the table, and everything is mixed up [laughs] in your tummy.

So this is, on one hand, very beautiful things. But on the other hand, if food—function of food is fulfilled when the—function of the food fulfilled, there is no more dishes [laughs]. So everything is—our practice is the same thing. You know, you—when you get up, you know, you brush your teeth and wash your face. That is practice. You do it one by one carefully. And when you practice zazen, you practice zazen. One by one.

But, you know, none of them cannot be perfect practice, even though to wash your face is very good habit [laughs]. But, you know, even though it is good, if you are always washing your face [laughs], you cannot attain enlightenment [laughs, laughter]. Same thing will—can be said with your zazen practice. Zazen is very good practice. But even though you just always practicing zazen, you know, it doesn't work [laughs].

Zazen practice is something express—or purpose of zazen practice [is] to catch something as it is in mixed-up state. When you—so that is why you don't think, you know. When you think it—it must be each, you know—it must be each salad or bean or meat or eggs, you can think about meat or, you know, salad, but if it is mixed up, you know, in your tummy [laughs], you cannot think about it. So if you wa- [partial word]—if you want to real- [partial word]—catch reality in its true sense, you cannot think about it. When your life energy is burning in perfect combustion, you cannot catch it. That is zazen. But even zazen cannot be always same. As something you eat in your tummy does not stay always in the same way, it will change into something else.

So even [if] you practice hard, your zazen sometime will be good, sometime will not be so good. It is—actually it is not always in the same—we cannot practice our way in the same way always. The purpose of zazen is not to think about it. To catch ourselves in its full function is zazen. If so, there is no need to think about it. If you think about it, you cannot—you will lose it. When you don't think and [are]

² Hashimoto Eko-rōshi (1890–1965): a scholar of Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* and an authority on the origins of the traditional *okesa*. He was Dainin Katagiri-rōshi's second master at Eihei-ji.

involved in the practice fully, you have zazen.

Even it is so, we have to prepare everything one by one carefully. That is our everyday life. When you wash your face you should wash your face carefully. When you walk you should walk carefully. One by one you take care of your activity. But when you are taking care of your activity, you are involved in something which is—which cannot be grasped. You are not anymore you.

So each—in each activity there is two side: positive and negative. Something which can be, or suchness and—what should I say—mixed-up state or ingraspable or unintelligible. So, "What is it?" When Baso asked Hyakujō, "What is it?" Baso should understand what he meant. And, "Where has he gone—have they gone?" He should understand what he meant. He was talking about our practice, the relationship between everyday activity and our practice, and what is our practice, and what is our everyday life. And everyday life is zazen, and zazen is everyday life. In this way, back and forth, he should assert his practice—he should make his practice sure.

In the sky, sometime wild geese is flying. And after that some cloud will come. And after that the bright moon will come. But each of the wild geese and cloud and moon is not—are not always same. The bright moon is bright moon, and wild geese are wild geese, and cloud is cloud. But at the same time, the moon is not moon, cloud is not cloud, and wild geese are not wild geese. They exist in the same place in mixed-up stage—state. Even [though] it is mixed-up, you know, we should—our practice should be concentrated on each moment. When we see the moon, we should see the moon. When we see the cloud, we should see the cloud. And we should appreciate everything one by one.

If people, you know, mixed up everything—or if so—if everything is changing and if everything exist in mixed-up way, there will be no need to work hard, you know. If everything is mixed-up from the beg-[partial word]—every—always, what is the point of appreciating everything if everything is just phenomenon? Why do we appreciate such a tentative phenomenal world?

If you understand in that way, that is—we shall—that is like to serve food in mixed-up [laughs] way. Salad and rice, [laughs] brown rice and *miso* soup in one big pail [laughs], mixed-up in bucket or something. It will be served for you. How do you [laughing] feel to eat from bucket like a pig [laughter]? It doesn't make any sense, you know. Even though it will be mixed-up in our tummy, we should serve one by one. Buying [?] each other [?]. That is our way, you know. But we do not keep it separately in our tummy.

But people, you know, some rigid people want to keep it one by one in their tummy, which is not possible. So that is why they suffer, you know. They don't feel so good. They cannot [be] satisfied with the way the food is served. Those people cannot be satisfied with human life, you know. Human being is so [laughs] indifferent. That is not right understanding of life.

Rikyū³—do you know Rikyū? Rikyū is—is supposed to be the founder of—founder of tea ceremony. He sweep—he would sweep the garden, and he appreciate the falling leaf—leaves on well-swept garden. If the purpose of sweeping the garden is to get rid of leaves, you know, why he can—he did appreciate—why he appreciated the leaves on the well-swept garden? Leaves on the, you know, well-cleaned garden and leaves on the—in the mountain is not same—are not same. The feeling is quite different. Some people may say it is useless, you know, to sweep garden every morning when so many leaves are cu- [partial word]—falling.

If you try to understand—if you understand the nature in its full sense, we are also a part of nature. We have something to do with nature, and we cannot satisfy without doing anything. We should participate [in] the nature. So even in Zen picture—Zen painting or drawing or what—picture maybe—*sansui*, we say. *Sansui* means "mountain and river." We paint one or two people—fisherman or woodcutter or farmer.

Nature—we are a part of nature. So the most natural way to observe nature for us is to do something—to participate [in] the great activity of nature. That is how we appreciate nature. And that is how we exist in this world. And that is how mountains and river exist. There is some rules in nature, and there is some rules in observing nature for human beings. And rules the nature has, and rules in observing things in human side is not different. We live in same time and same place. We live in same framework. So originally man and nature is not different. But when our civilization become so materialistic, and after violating nature, or after we tired out violating nature and material life, we are going to the other extreme, and just appreciate mountains and river, ignoring human life. That is one side of it—understanding or appreciation of nature.

We human being understand things from various angle—mainly from positive side and negative side. And when we observe things from both side—when we—when we are able to appreciate things from both side, one by one, there we have true way of life and true practice. We should not be involved in always just one-sided way of appreciating

³ Sen Soeki Rikyū (1522-1591) is credited with developing the Way of Tea. He served as tea master to the *shōgun* Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598), who eventually ordered Rikyū to commit *seppuku*.

our life. Sometime positive, sometime negative. So in this sense we should practice our way in various way—observing ceremonies and not observing ceremonies by just sit. This is our way should be.

Source: City Center original tape. Verbatim transcript by Adam Tinkham and Bill Redican (3/30/01).