

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
Tuesday, December 5, 1967
Evening *Sesshin* Lecture
Tassajara
Lecture B

As the nature of our practice is, like I told you over and over, and the point [of] our effort is directed—is like this, for beginner it looks like very discouraging and frustrating. Someone said it is [laughs]—Zen is like standing on—on your head [laughs], you know. It is simple [laughing], but to keep standing is very difficult. In *dokusan* someone said. I think that is very true, but to stand on your head should not be difficult. But to keep standing is too difficult.

But if you don't know what is true practice, and where you should put your effort, and nature of our practice based on the human nature or nature of culture—human culture, we cannot make appropriate effective effort in helping ourselves and others. This kind of instruction given by Dōgen-zenji is like a lighthouse in the stormy ocean. When the sea is very calm, you should rather expect—you should rather to have—like to have a storm [laughs]. And most—most of the young people has this kind of feeling—this kind of resistance.

When we have this kind of resistance, to observe something quite common is difficult because it is not so encouraging thing. But if you are under a very critical situation, you will have—you will have to have, or you will find out your true nature.

I talked about "insane" last lecture, this afternoon.¹ Most people who are insane at first, I think, the symptom of them is to express the feeling of resistance in various way. And they cannot help resisting what people say, what people may like to doing. If you say "stay at home," they will run away. If you don't say so, he might stay home, but the instant—the moment you say "please stay—you should stay at home more," he will go away. That is the expression of the resistance.

By nature our effort is directed to outward, not inward. So for them it is—for them because they are not mentally so strong, so it is difficult to work in opposite way, or you may say to control their way. It is quite different from controlling power. Our, you know, way is not to [be] prohibitive or controlling. Just to put our effort to the other direction is our way, and we will have more difficulty in make shift of our direction of effort. So for the weak—mentally weak person, it is difficult to keep themselves—themselves from feeling of resistance. At first they resist everything, but sometime they may feel big—great regret, or they may feel great sad feeling because they cannot observe things—he cannot observe things as he should do.

¹ SR-67-12-05-A.

And well-developed human nature—the revival of well-developed human nature all of sudden happens to their mind. Once this kind of revival of highly developed human activity take place, they feel very sad that they cannot observe things as they should do according to the highly developed human nature. Originally it is our joy to develop our nature, but that development of the human nature is contaminated—is in the—a kind of contamination in our culture—in our social framework. We become sick of it. We become tired of it. And we feel big resistance against it. But when we are in the position from where we have to reach for the well-developed human life, we seek for it, and we adore for it, and we miss it. That is actually how we feel resistance and how we become very obedient.

Usually resistance and obedience is two quite different tendency or activity of mind or function of mind. But originally it is not different. There we have reason why we practice something informally and why we practice our way in the opposite way. Because you feel some resistance to your old culture, you should practice zazen. And you feel better to practice our way, because our practice is the expression of our resistance to the old way of life.

In our practice, we should forget all about the idea of good or bad, right or wrong. But when old culture become rigid and concrete, the old culture will force something always anew. But in our practice, even though we do not ignore the idea of good or bad, but we are not caught by the idea of good or bad any more. Instead of expressing resistance to outward, we resume our original nature or universal nature or stage—state of our mind before crystallized in some particular way.

I think if you know the true way of zazen, because you are young—because you have some feeling of resistance, you will practice more our way, and feeling of resistance to old way of life will encourage your practice. Moreover, you will—your mind will be big enough to accept the old way of life we had. When our practice come to this point, we say don't think "good and bad," or "right or wrong." When we do not think "right or wrong," "good or bad," our mind is big enough accept things whether it is old or whether it is new. Who told us the teaching or who force some way of life to us doesn't matter. We will not lose our way, and we will create—we will develop our way in our own idea and in our own way. There is freedom of creativity.

It is silly for us just to be caught by the feeling of resistance. The resistance, because of the discrimination, is a kind of imitation. But usually [in] imitation we imitate something. In the same way, but in—when we have resistance, we imitate in opposite way [laughs]. That is just—you imitate in the same way or the other way is the difference. But your way is caused by some outward object. In other word, your mind is enslaved by outward object. In this point, resistance and imitation is the same. You have no freedom. It means you—your mind is enslaved by it—by

something. So if you want to obtain the perfect freedom from everything, your effort should be directed inward. As long as you have this kind of practice, you have no danger—danger of being enslaved by anything. You have always perfect freedom.

So the more you understand a human being—human nature, the more you will [be] interested in our way. Another human nature is—maybe we like something wrong rather than right—rather than true [laughs]. This is something, you know—this is, maybe, same tendency we have when we feel some resistance. Something which is true is maybe always very common and not so interesting, not so colorful. It is just plain and common. So you do not—you have no interest in it. Something which is wrong [laughs] is very interest—interesting to you to see, you know.

As Dōgen-zenji in his instruction of zazen, "Don't," you know, "be afraid of true dragon."² In China there was a man who liked dragon very much. Even though he didn't see—he haven't dragon—but even though he didn't know actually what it was [laughs], he was very much interested in dragon, and he liked to talk about dragon. This kind of, you know, feeling we have always. Even though we don't know what is zazen, people like to talk about zazen all day and night, all night and day [laughs, laughter]. But Dōgen-zenji said, "Don't be surprised at the true dragon." [Laughs.] You know, those people will be surprised—or not surprised but will be silent when they see true dragon because it is not so interesting [laughs, laughter]. So Dōgen-zenji said, "Don't be surprised at true dragon." [Laughs.]

But common as it is—if you know how common it is, you know, and if you know—if the true dragon will appease your ambitious thought or your unsatisfied feeling in your everyday life, you will be interested in our practice in its true sense. This kind of interest is not usual interest to be [of being] proud of your power or your understanding, but something which will give you—which will appease all the ambitious thought and all the resistance. That is why many artist and poet and samurai or some influential person who found dead end in their way practiced zazen.

There is limit in our effort, and there is limit in our power to attain something. Whether you become famous or not is the difference of—difference of whether you become famous or not is by—may be by sheet of paper. If you are strong—stronger than the other a little bit, you know, you will become famous. That's all. If you can do it bit—little bit ahead of people, you will be successful. To be involved in that kind of competition is

² Probably referring to the story of Sho-kung or Yeh Kung-tzu (Jap. Seiko or Shoko) in the *Hsin-hsú* or *Shen-tzu lüeh* (*Shinshi Ryaku*) and the *Latter Han History*. Sho-kung loved painted and carved dragons but was terrified when visited one day by the real thing. "Do not become so accustomed to images that you are dismayed by the real dragon" (Dōgen-zenji, *Fukan Zazen-gi*, in Nishijima and Cross, ed., *Shōbōgenzō*, 1994, Vol. 1, p. 282). See also SR-69-09-00-A and SR-71-06-05.

to sacrifice yourself. And it is silly, you know, to be involved in this kind of life.

Our way of life should be more stable, and more wide, and more open to everyone. Keeping something just within yourself is one of the violence [violations]—violence of one of our precepts. What—whether it may be material or spiritual, not to open up for others is the violence of the precepts. Our mind should be open to everyone. If you want to open up your mind, you should resume your true mind or essence of mind—some essence of mind, according to the Sixth Patriarch.

I am sorry I didn't bring my glasses, so [laughs] will you read it from here to here? About one page. I—I have read it up to here.³ You are *jisha*,⁴ so [laughs, laughter]—ask you to read from here—

Jisha: To here, or—?

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm. "Think unthinkable," and there is some paragraph here. No paragraph?

Jisha: No.

Suzuki-rōshi: Okay. Just start by your—by the new sentence.

Jisha: [3-4 words unclear.]

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Jisha: No—to where?

Suzuki-rōshi: To here.

Jisha: To here. Okay. [2-3 words.] Okay. I'm a little hoarse, so I hope you can understand it.

Suzuki-rōshi: Okay.

Jisha: *When you stand from zazen, shake your body and arise calmly. Do not be rough. That which transcends the ordinary person and the sage—*

³ In SR-67-12-01-A. The student appears to be reading from Reiho Masunaga's translation of *Fukan Zazen-gi (The Sōtō Approach to Zen, 1958, pp. 101-102)*, but several phrases are translated differently. Therefore, the translation of this passage may have been modified by Suzuki-rōshi. There is a gap of one-half paragraph between the passage Suzuki-rōshi read in SR-67-12-01-A and the passage read here. Not all lectures in the *sesshin* were recorded and/or survived on tape, so the missing half-paragraph was probably read between Dec. 2 and Dec. 4, 1967.

⁴ *jisha*: attendant to a priest.

dying while sitting and standing—is obtained through the help of this power. This I have seen. Also the supreme function⁵ (lifting the finger,⁶ using the needle,⁷ hitting the wooden gong) and enlightenment signs (such as raising the hossu,⁸ striking with the fist, hitting with the staff, and shouting) are not understood by discrimination nor differentiation. You cannot understand training and enlightenment well by using supernatural power. It is the practice (sitting, standing, and sleeping) beyond voice and visible things. Isn't this a true rule beyond discriminatory views? So don't argue about the wise and foolish. If you can only train hard, this is true enlightenment. Training and enlightenment are by nature undefiled. Living by Zen is not separated from daily life.⁹

Suzuki-rōshi: What he says is very, you know, common, and Zen is for everyone. But, you know, in everywhere you will find some unusual statement. All the unusual activity of Zen master is based on this deep understanding of our practice, or else he does not deserve the name of true Zen master. His whole day—whole life effort is directed on this point. And I have been talking about maybe same thing over and over again, so many times. And I will continue [laughs, laughter]. I am sorry—same thing over and over again [laughs]. But I feel very good, you know [laughter], because I find something new, you know, in my feeling whenever I continue [2-3 words].

This is the joy of our practice. And it may be good idea for us to read this *Fukan Zazen-gi* little by little after zazen. We will discuss how we should do with Chino-sensei¹⁰ later.

Thank you very much.

Source: City Center original tape. Verbatim transcript by Adam Tinkham and Bill Redican (4/4/01).

⁵ Means employed by Zen masters for leading their students toward enlightenment. (See N. Wadell and Abe Masao, "Dōgen's *Fukanzazengi* and *Shōbōgenzō zazengi*, in *The Eastern Buddhist*, 1973, 6 (2).)

⁶ Gutei raising one finger (Case 3 of *Mumonkon, Gateless Gate*). Most translations include "banner" here, a reference to Ananda becoming enlightened upon taking down a banner over a gate (*Keitoku Dentōroku*, 1).

⁷ Kanadeva dropping a needle into a bowl brimming with water (*Keitoku Dentōroku*, 2).

⁸ *hossu* (Jap.) (San. *vyajana*): a whisk made with long animal hair.

⁹ Two more paragraphs of *Fukan Zazen-gi* remain to be read.

¹⁰ Kobun Chino Otagawa-rōshi came from Eihei-ji in June of 1967 to Tassajara, where he served as head of training for monks (see *Wind Bell*, Fall 1967, Vol. VI, No. 2-4, p. 17). In 1983 he founded Jiko-ji temple in Los Gatos, in the Santa Cruz mountains of northern California.