

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
THE BLUE CLIFF RECORD, Case 43
Saturday, July 26, 1969
Tassajara

A monk asked Tōzan—Zen Master Tōzan¹—can you hear me?—

"It is so hot," you know. "How is it possible to go somewhere where it is not hot?"²

Tōzan asked to the monk: "Why don't you go," you know, "somewhere it is not so hot?"

And Tōzan said—Tōzan asked him—told him, "Why don't you go somewhere it is not so hot?"

"But wherever I go, when it is hot, it is hot," he said—the monk said.

Tōzan answered the question and said: "When it is hot, you should kill the hot; when it is cold, you should kill the cold."

To kill cold or hot—it—I don't know how you understand it. Maybe for beginner it is pretty hard to sit when your legs are painful. I think it is more difficult for the—for someone to sit with painful legs in hot weather. But how you, you know, practice zazen in such a difficulty—with such difficulty, is something you should understand.

Whenever I had some pain in my legs I used to think about this kōan, and I try—try not to move, even though my legs are painful. When it is hot, I—when I went to *tangaryō*—entered *tangaryō*—it was summertime.³ So it is very hard for me to sit, although I practiced zazen before I go to Eihei-ji monastery. But still it was pretty hard to sit all day long in crossed-legged position. When it is very painful and when I felt very hot, you know, the big cryptomeria⁴ tree started to swing [laughs]. That is—it is not the big tree that started to swing. My mind started to swing this way [probably gestures]. All the big trees started—started to move like this. And I found out that I didn't—I couldn't allowed to see my watch in *tangaryō*, but I—I thought in every—in ten—every ten minutes, you

¹ Dongshan Liangjie (Tōzan Ryōkai): 807–869. Chan master in Tang China. Dharma successor of Ungan Donjō; master of Sozan Kyōnin. Co-founder of Sōtō school of Zen.

² Case 43 of *Hekiganroku (The Blue Cliff Record)*, "Tōzan's 'No Cold or Heat.'" Also cited in *Shōbōgenzō* "Shunju," in a translation that is more similar to Suzuki-rōshi's usage.

³ September 17, 1930.

⁴ Japanese cedar.

know, peak of the pain comes [laughs], you know, like this. And—and the cryptomeria trees start to move like this.

When the pain come to the peak of the—peak, it, you know, start to calm down. Every—maybe every ten minutes, you know, like wave it comes and goes. But pain in your legs doesn't hurt you, so it is all right, you know, even though you feel painful. This kind of practice is necessary. And if you try to sit, you know, you must have the strong confidence that you do not stand up or move. Even though what kind of difficulty you may have, you should try your best.

To kill the pain or cold or hot, means to become one with, you know, pain. You should—you should forget, you know, about your legs, you know. You should become one with pain, not your body's pain, but pain. And it is not "you" who feel the pain, because you are one with the pain. That which exist is the—just pain. Nothing exist but the pain. You have no legs or no body. No body. Or no feeling. Then it means that you, when we say to kill the pain, it means that you become one with the pain.

At first, you know, it is pretty difficult to wear many clothes in hot weather, when it is hot. But, you know, even though you take off all of your, you know, clothing, it is still hot [laughs]. So as long as you are trying to, you know, take off, you know, your dress one by one, you may be still hot. So if you fix—when you fix your mind not to take off your dress even though it is hot, then there is some possibility for you to stay in hot weather. But most people, you know, when you feel hot, you start to take off your suits. But that is not way. Most people, you know, seek for some shady place, you know—start to seek for some—try to go [to] some cooler place.

That is all right, but if you [are] determine to sit, you should not try to find out some easy way. The only way is to sit where you are, and to find out the complete absolute composure where you sit. That is how we sit, and that is so-called-it *shikantaza*.

So Sōtō priest translate—may translate "to kill cold or hot": "When it is hot, you should be hot buddha. When it is—excuse me—hot you should be hot buddha. When it is cold, you should be cold buddha." Literally it says: "When it is hot, you should kill." *Kansatsu jari*⁵ means: *jari* means, you know, a priest or monk. "You should kill the monk by cold or by hot." But the actual meaning is "to be cold buddha or to be hot buddha." So it may be better to translate it in this way: "When it is cold, you should become cold buddha or cold priest or cold monk. When it is hot, you should be hot priest or hot monk." That is the stage we

⁵ *kansatsu* (Jap.): "cold is nothing but cold"; to give oneself up to cold [when it is cold]. *jari* (Jap.): abbreviation of *ajari* (*ācārya*, San.), a senior priest or monk.

should attain, you know. "When it is cold you should be cold buddha."

When you are trying to seek for some attainment, it is the stage "form is emptiness." But after you attain—you start the practice of "form is emptiness," you know, you should find out that everything should—is buddha. Buddha is everything. So that is "emptiness is form."

And "emptiness is emptiness" means to get rid of the attainment you attained. And when you bec- [partial word]—are quite free from attainment, that stage is "form is form." Where there is no—when it is hot, you should be hot buddha, you know. That is "form is form"—the stage of "form is form." As long as you, you know, stick to your attainment, your attainment does not work. So when you are free from your attainment, your attainment will start to work.

So if you say, "I attain this kind of stage," you know, as long as you say, "I attain this kind of stage," you are not ordinal [ordinary] person. So you cannot communicate with ordinal [ordinary] person. You may be—you may be something different person from ordinal [ordinary] one, but that is not our stage to attain. When you become completely ordinal [ordinary] person, after your attainment, you are said to be perfect—you are said to have perfect attainment.

Maybe this is the characteristic of Zen. We do not stay [in] some certain stage. For us there is no stage to stay [in]. When it is cold, we are cold buddha [laughs]. When it is hot, we are hot buddha. We may say: "Oh, it is hot!" [Laughs.] But we do not [say] any complaint.

"Oh, it is hot. Oh, it is cold." To say so is all right, but if—if you don't try to escape from [it], it is all right. That is the stage [in which] you can help people in its complete sense. Sometime, you know, if you have—if you are respected, or when people respect you, you know, because of your attainment, you will find out some—you will find out some way to help them. That is true. But that is not perfect. When you completely forget about your attainment, and you become completely good friend of others, I think you can help people in its true sense.

The people may not, you know, even [be] aware of being helped by such person, but actually they are helped by him in its true sense. It is—maybe, you know, for an instance, if I try to help people as a priest like this wearing *okesa* and robe, you know, sometime it is easy, but I cannot help all of them. You may say: "Oh, you are priest," you know [laughs], "so that is why you—you can say so. But I—I have various," you know, "commitment. I have my family. I cannot give up my business. So you cannot be good example of layman." You may say so. It is same thing if you are rich: It is rather difficult to help people. "Oh, you are so rich, so that is why you have no problem. But I have no money. [Laughs, laughter.] I have—that is why I have so many difficulties." So it is

rather hard for a rich man to help others.

Without money, if you are happy, you know, then you will be a good example of people. The people may try to, you know, try to be like you if you have nothing to give him—give them, or if you have no particular status. I think this is, you know, best way to help people. I think so, you know, because I belong to Sōtō school [laughs]. But at the same time, it is not so easy. That is why I am wearing robe like this, always. I feel, you know, I feel always protection, you know, by my robe. I know that is not so good, but [laughter] as Sōtō priest I should be like Ryōkan,⁶ you know, who—who is—who was almost a beggar. And yet he—he was a—a famous, you know, poet and scholar. But after, you know, he died, we found out he was so great. But when—I think, when he was alive, no one, you know, knew that he was such a great person.

Wherever he is in his trip, lonely trip, he, you know, he—always, in his mind, there was Dōgen-zenji. And he left many poem about his adoration to Dōgen. I think I—as long as you stick to some position, we are not really, in its true sense, we are not Dōgen's descendents. So even though we wear those robes, you know, we should forget about those robes. Although we observe strictly, you know, the way of wearing those things—how—there is strict manner to wear those robes—even though we are observing strictly our way, at the same time, we should be completely detached from the rituals and robes. Do you understand? Maybe, you know, if we are—if I am very strict with the manner or rituals, usually you think, "He is very rigid," you may say—you may say so. But actually it is not so. This is, you know, something which is difficult for you to understand. That is why we have so many, you know —we repeat:

Form is emptiness.
Emptiness is form.
Form is form.

And:

Emptiness is emptiness.

Even though you study those four lines or statements as a whole life study, you will find—you will have something more to study. Most of you, in [at] your age, I think, that you attained is—will be the stage—may be "emptiness is form." Most of you may be "form is emptiness." When you, you know, see some, you know—when you at- [partial word] —you have some attainment or some understanding [of] what is emptiness, you feel as if you attained something pretty well—not completely but pretty well. And you feel you are something different from usual person. "Oh, they don't understand what I attained. But I know what it is, you know. I am something different from ordinal [ordinary] person." You will be—most people will stay forever in this

⁶ Ryōkan Daigu (1758?-1831): Sōtō monk and renowned poet.

stage. And you will be very proud of your attainment. And you will behave quite different way from usual people. But that is, you know, the second stage or—first stage or second stage. And there are many things to study after you attain that kind of attainment.

Why you st- [partial word]—why you stay without ma- [partial word]—without making any progress at the first stage or second stage is mostly because you don't know the real practice—what is real practice, and because you do not have real teacher.

Dōgen-zenji says: "Most people," you know, "thinks real teacher is someone who has a great knowledge, or someone who has a mysterious power, or someone who is different from ordinal [ordinary] people. But you should—even," you know, "children of seven years old may be your teacher," he said,⁷ if you, you know, after you attain first stage or second stage.

So great scholar or great Zen master can be a good—will give you—will give us a great encouragement. But as long as you accept him because of his knowledge, because of his power of practice, then he is not it [?]
—he is not, you know, for you right teacher.

It is, you know—whether he is good teacher or not is not only because of his ability, but because of real understanding of practice, or because you have true understanding of our way. When you, you know—when you know what is our practice and what is our ultimate attainment, you will start to respect [a teacher], you know, even [if] he is—is a child, you know. You will start to respect him. So it is not matter of "he is great" or "he is ordinal [ordinary]," in that case, if you know what is our practice.

If you don't know, you know, what is real practice, you should have some teacher who knows what is real practice, even though he is not real teacher. But if he is striving for the ultimate attainment, he will be a good teacher and he will practice with you forever. Or else I don't think I can be a—I can be your teacher, you know [laughs]. I know what is right practice, but I know, at the same time, I am not, you know, perfect teacher. I know what is real practice, and I know I am not perfect. But I know how to help you and how to be a good friend of you. I think even though I am not perfect, I can be a teacher, you know, especially when a child of seven years old could be your teacher [laughs, laughter]. I am not making some excuse for me, [but] that is true, I think. That is why Dōgen-zenji says: "There is no problem for us to study our lofty way. People may say 'lofty way,' but the—our gate is widely open to everyone. Everyone could be a teacher." Every one of us could be a teacher if we know what is real practice.

⁷ *Shōbōgenzō* "Raihai-tokuzui."

I have ten minutes more [laughs, laughter]. If you have question, please ask me. Do you have some question? No? *Hai*.

Student A: Could you explain more how we should practice our way strictly, without being attached to it?

Suzuki-rōshi: Strictly. Yeah. You want strictness [laughs, laughter]. I think if you want strictness, it may be enough, you know. If you meet, you know, some strict—if you find out how strict our human life is, you know, you will be encouraged by the difficulties you have in our human life. Even though you come to—enter into the deep valley of Tassajara, you know, you cannot escape from the human life. And our human life is pretty strict. It looks like very easy, but actually it isn't.

Hard practice in monastery is not so hard, but to practice our way in the city is much difficult. So I understand, you know, why you want strictness in your practice. I understand that. But if I am very strict with you, you know, I must be dead, you know, with you [laughs]. Maybe before—before, you know—in—in—maybe in one or two months, I will be dead—trying to be very strict with you [laughs, laughter]. So let's, you know, make best effort, anyway [laughs, laughter]. Some other question? *Hai*.

Student B: Rōshi, you spoke in one lecture about—you got to the Seventh Mind. But you didn't tell us where the Eighth Mind was. Where is the Eighth Mind? [Laughs, laughter.]

Suzuki-rōshi: Eighth Mind—Eighth Mind is "no mind," is Eighth Mind. The Seventh Mind is, you know, "some mind." [Laughs, laughter.] "This is mind," you know. "I understand it. You are good teacher." That is Seventh Mind. Even though Seventh Mind say so, you know, you shouldn't trust him [laughs]. Do you understand [laughs, laughter]? Seventh Mind is ego—ego-centered mind, you know. "I understand it. I think he is a good teacher. I think he is not so good." So you should always ... [*Sentence not finished. Tape turned over.*]

Student C: ... "emptiness is form" and "form is emptiness." Is that the English of *yu soku mu* and *mu soku yu*?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah—you—*wu soku*—yeah, you can—yeah, that is—that is correct. *Mu* means "not"—we say "emptiness" but actually it is not—it may not be good translation [laughs, laughter]. So whatever you say, that is a kind of sign, you know. *Mu*. Do you have some more question?

Student D [probably Bill Shurtleff]: Sometimes when we're sitting and pain starts to come—

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh.

Student D: —we have a choice of becoming one with the pain or of escaping from it—

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

Student D: —by unfolding our legs.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student D: And I find that when I become one with the pain or continue sitting with the pain, afterwards I feel, somehow, proud. [Laughter.]

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm. Yeah.

Student D: What do you think about that? [Laughter.]

Suzuki-rōshi: Afterwards—you [think], "It is good. It is [1-2 words]," you know, because you think—afterwards you think, you know. When you are practicing, you know, you don't—you will not be proud of it. You will just do it. When, you know, you become proud of it, you know, all at once your legs start to ache.

It is that kind of time when you, you know, attain *kenshō* experience, you know, before you become proud of it, if you hear something, you know, or all of sudden, or if you receive a big slap or something, you know, all of sudden you will lose everything. Anyway, you know, the important point is to become just one with it, whether you become aware of it by outward stimulation or not, you know. When something happen to you, you know, you will—you have no time to become proud of it [laughs]. *Whhht!* All of a sudden, everything bounced up, and you will lose everything, so that you have no time to be proud of it. That is so-called-it *kenshō* experience. But even enough you have that kind of experience, because of lack of outward stimulation, we cannot say you haven't that kind of practice.

Thank you very much.

Source: City Center transcript entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997. Transcript checked against tape and made verbatim by Judith L. Randall and Bill Redican (12/27/00).