

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
SUMMER SESSHIN: SIXTH NIGHT LECTURE
Tassajara
September 1969

We discussed about the question and answer between the Seventeenth Patriarch and Eighteenth Patriarch.¹

"Whether bell is ringing or wind is ringing?" the teacher said.

Disciple said: "Not wind nor bell ringing, but our mind is ringing."

And the teacher said: "What kind of mind is it?"

And the disciple said: "The mind of complete calmness."

And usually when we hear someone say: "No bell—or not bell or wind, but mind is ringing"—then, most people say: "Oh, that is very good answer." But that is not a complete answer. "Mind is ringing" means—if we don't hear the bell, you know, we—we can—we cannot—there is no sound. Because we—our mind hear it and our mind recognize the sound, the sound exist. That is true, but that is not perfect answer [laughs]. Why, you know?

The sound of the bell, you know, is the activity of whole universe, and blow of the—blowing window—wind is also activity of whole universe which, you know, covers everything. That we hear our activity of mind is also the activity of whole universe, not only my activity but also activity of whole universe. So one activity include everything. In this case, that mind is called "big mind" or "capital mind." My mind, you know is—our mind is our small mind. But mind which include everything is capital mind. Although the character is same, but we understand this character in two ways: small mind and big mind.

So the [teacher asked], "What kind of mind is it?" Small mind or big mind, you know. Although the teacher didn't say so, but he meant—what he meant: "What kind of mind is it? Is it the mind which hear something, which recognize something?" And disciple said: "No. That mind is big mind, which is in complete calmness." That was his answer.

Now this is, you know, how we practice zazen. How our mind work or

¹ Suzuki-rōshi is referring to SR-69-09-00.C, p. 5. This version of the story is told in *Denkoroku*, Chapter 19. The Seventeenth Indian Patriarch was Samghanandi (Jap. Sōgyanandai) (d. 74 B.C.E.). The Eighteenth Indian Patriarch was Samghayāthata (Jap. Gayāshata).

exist is—how our—each one's own mind exist is so-called-it in "inter-relationship." You know, my mind is supported by all of you, you know, and each one's mind is supported by all of mind. So, you know, and at the same time, each one's mind is supporting, you know, supporting everyone's mind.

So, you know, arrow [?] comes from all of you, and I am receiving it. And at the same time I am giving, you know, my mind to each one of you, like this [probably gestures]. That is how our mind exist and how things exist. That is so-called-it inter-relationship. Inter-relationship does not mean just between two but between every being which exist in this world. So, you know, it is rather difficult—it is difficult to say this—"my mind" or "your mind." We cannot say, you know, exactly if this mind is mine or yours. In this way our mind exist. But actually, our mind exist in this way, but because of our karma, you know [laughs], we are doing something extra [laughs]. We have many trouble.

Originally we have no trouble between us. But [laughs] we have home-made trouble. That is so-called-it karma. And as long as we exist, everyone has karma, and from which it is not possible to escape from it all of [a] sudden. Little by little you can change your karma, but you cannot—. We should know this point, you know, also. Even though you practice zazen or attain enlightenment, on the other hand you have [laughs] your own karma. So until you are quite free from your karma, it takes time. This point also we should know [laughs, laughter]. That is why we cannot practice zazen so well, you know—because of our own karma we suffer.

If you eat too much, you know, or if you work too hard, you cannot practice so well. But those problems, you know, in your practice is also—if you think clearly, it is also exist in relationship to others—to other activity you have done.

We have been practicing counting-breathing [laughs] practice. I am sorry—very sorry for you [laughter] for putting you in such a difficult, you know, practice. I know how difficult it is, but I think unless you know—until you know how difficult it is, you will, you know, [not] find out—you will not realize how important it is to practice counting-breathing practice once in a while to check your practice.

Actually, you know, secret of counting [laughter], you know, breathing practice is, you know [laughter]—hmm—if you laugh I will not give you—I will not [tell you] [laughter]. This is rather, you know—this secret is—must be kept only for me, but [laughs, laughter] as you have—you have been practicing so hard without knowing it [loud laughter]—why I put you in this—in this practice [is] I only wanted you to know how difficult it is! [Laughs, laughter.] Not only, you know, counting-

breathing practice. Just to—to have good breathing is difficult enough. And we say—Dōgen-zenji say—excuse me [drinks water]: "After all, what is your inhaling and exhaling? After all, what is it? Therefore, there is no self." "After all, what is it? What is the exhaling and what is the inhaling? After all, what is it?" Therefore it is—maybe if you write this sentence, you know: "After all, what is—after all [laughs, laughter], what is it?"—you know, and question mark, and many dots. "And so there is no self." "After all," you know, "who you are?"—you know, question mark, and many dots. "So there is no self." Do you understand?

We are receiving many things from numberless—numberless people. And we are giving out many things to numberless people. We think we are just exhaling or inhaling, but where the air come and where our exhaling is going? To where is it going? So there is no self. No one knows what we are doing. What is even just one exhaling? [It] is not possible to know what is it. It is—we say it is inhaling or exhaling. That is—may be right, but actually no one knows what it is.

Everything is like this, you know. Jane's, you know, robe or dress is black, you know. But what is black [laughs]? If you dip the material six time, you know, in strong, black thing [?], it may be almost black but it—not complete, maybe. If you dip it ten times, it—it may be black, but almost—still "almost black." Then what is "black"? No one knows. But we know—as if—we feel as if we know what is black exactly. "Oh, that is black," we say, but if someone ask you: "Is that black?" you may say: "Maybe black. Looks like black."

It is almost impossible to know what is even black and what is human being, what is inhaling and exhaling. And if someone ask you what is Zen [laughs], you know, is it possible to, you know, answer for that kind of complicated, you know, big practice? It is not possible. And what is counting-breathing, you know, practice? The—most people may think that is just beginner's practice—just beginner's practice. [It] cannot be so difficult. "If you have strong willpower, we can do it. If you have enough sleep and eat properly, then you can do it." But not that easy. That you can think that is easy is wrong, completely wrong. Nothing can be so easy. If you start to practice with this understanding for [in] the first place, you know, you can practice counting-breathing practice pretty well: not complete, but pretty well.

Actually, your posture, you know, and your breathing, and your *mudrā* is helping, you know, counting-breathing practice. So counting-breathing practice [is] also helping your posture, and your breathing, and calmness of your mind. So counting-breathing practice is not just counting-breathing practice. It is actually following-breathing practice. And it may be *shikantaza* too. So all those practice is actually many names of one practice. So it is wrong to think counting-breathing

practice is just beginner's practice. It is not so. And just to follow your breathing is not following-breathing practice. Just like just to sit, just counting your breathing, is not counting-breathing practice.

To count your breathing will be, you know, for the beginner, will help your practice, like pain [in] your legs will help your practice. But at the same time, it will be disturbance for your practice. Sometime, you know, you feel much better to sit without counting because, you know, if you count it creates some disturbance to your—for your calmness of your mind.

But the point is, without being disturbed by disturbance, or without relying on any help, to sit properly in *shikantaza*. So how to, you know, practice our way without relying on something, without being disturbed by something, is the point of our practice.

You may, you know, if someone asks: "How should I do when we have too much idea in our mind? What should I do?" You may say: "Let them come in, let them go out. That is how we practice zazen." To say in that way is very easy [laughs, laughter]—very—very easy. And someone who—who asked him: "Oh, that is quite easy. If you think—even though—then it doesn't matter whatever you think in your practice," you know. "Let them come in [laughs], and let them go out. That—if that is practice, Zen is pretty easy." But actually it is not that easy [laughs].

When you, you know, add something on your practice like counting-breathing practice, naturally, in *shikantaza*, if you sit, you know, without being bothered by anything, without rely on something else, just to sit in *shikantaza*. But if you add something to it, you will realize how difficult it is to carry on our practice into our everyday life. And at the same time, if you find it difficult, then there is—there is your key to open the secret. As I told you, you know, I am not giving you the, you know, the secret of the box [laughs], but so that I can—you may have a key to open the secret of the practice, you know, I put you in counting-breathing practice this time.

In *dokusan* I couldn't—I am sorry I couldn't see you all, but I saw some of old students and some of comparatively new students, and I found out I am very much satisfied with your answer, you know. You gave me the answer which I expect—expected [laughs, laughter]. You came to the same conclusion. I think you have same key as mine. So the problem—next thing we should do is to open the box.

Here Dōgen-zenji talks about the—what is complete calmness. The complete calmness means to—to go beyond duality. How to go beyond duality is to practice something with complete effort, physical and mental. That is why we call it complete calmness is because those

activity we have include everything. So when each one of us include everything, there is no duality. Even though there is no duality, there is, you know, inter-relationship, and we are helping everyone, and we are helped by everyone. This is the final, you know, conclusion of our practice. Having this understanding always in your mind, and little by little to improve your practice is, in short, how we practice zazen.

Tomorrow we will have *shosan* ceremony, you know.² The *shosan* ceremony will be question and answer between student and teacher. And there must be some, you know, common ground, you know. There must be some mutual understanding, you know, to express some certain idea in words. If possible, you know, I want you to ask question about, for an instance, the—about counting-breathing practice or about something which we discussed in our lectures. I think you must have understood something, you know, [of] how we treat things, and how we express our—something which you have in your mind, and how you solve the problem, how you work on your difficulties. Having this kind of, you know, understanding in your mind, I want you [to] put it in form of question, you know.

It does not always mean to ask question is something you ask about which you don't know, you know. Even though you know it, you put it in form of question and ask me. And expect, you know, your—my answer for the question [laughs, laughter]. That is, you know, more like question between teacher and disciple. It is a kind of a mutual training, you know. To ask question is not to ask some help, you know. But to mutual training. In this way, back and forth, ancient Zen student trained themselves.

So you can ask yourself some question. And answer for the question, back and forth, in your mind you should do that. And if you prepare for that [laughs] you can ask me some question, and see what I will say [laughs, laughter]. So question and answer is very interesting, you know. Even though you expect some answer, you know, my answer will go [in] some [laughs] other direction. Even though my answer is something you didn't expect, you should be able to follow the direction. You shouldn't be lost.

And teacher will always try [laughs] to put you in some confusion [laughs, laughter]. Sometime, you know, your teacher will give you some answer which you expect. But back-and-forth in this way we will—we will help with each other.

So if it is question and answer is just to ask something which you don't know—is not so meaningful, you know. When you don't know how you should help yourself, even though you have some answer, you know, it will not work so well because you will not understand what really

² Lecture SR-69-09-00.E.

teacher meant by it. You will not have ear to listen to it, you know.
So i- [partial word] ... [*Sentence not finished. Tape turned over.*]

... to know how we should discuss things—way we discuss things.

I think this is—it is little bit earlier, but without having question and answer [laughs, laughter]—leaving question and answer for tomorrow, we will finish this evening's practice.

Thank you very much.

Source: City Center transcript entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997.
Transcript checked against tape and made verbatim by Bill Redican
(12/21/00).