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PRACTICE SHOULD NOT BE PERFECT SO
DESCENDANTS HAVE SOMETHING TO DO
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To accomplish something is difficult. And, you know, the difficulty you have moment after moment, which you have to work on, will continue forever [laughs, laughter]. I thought if I say so, if I say so, I thought you know, you may laugh [laughter]. And you are, you know, entrapped [laughs].

We say—we have saying: to—to attain enlightenment may not be so difficult, but to continue our practice is difficult. So after all, you know, why we practice zazen is to continue our practice. Or else, I think, our practice doesn't make much sense. We say we have to live on each moment, and we have to make our best in each moment. And moment after moment, if, you know, our practice continue with pain, with difficulties, it doesn't make much sense. Even though you have wonderful practice moment after moment [laughs], what will become of it? What is the purpose of life, then?

The purpose of life is not, actually, to accomplish something, but to continue our buddha way. So to continue our buddha way forever is to accomplish our way. "To accomplish" does not mean to reach some stage where we don't need to work anymore. So the most important point and most difficult thing is to continue our way and to have good successor for us who may, you know, succeed our way. That is the meaning of the transmission.

Transmission—we say "transmission," but there is nothing to transmit. But if we say there is something, that is the spirit of practice, to find someone who may, you know, continue our way. You know, my teacher,¹ when he mend the one of the building, he didn't mend the main building, but he just mend kitchen and zendō.² And he—at that time he said: "If I try I can do it, but I must leave something for my disciples to do" [laughs].

I couldn't understand what he meant exactly. You know, to—it—the purpose of mending building or building something is not just to have some facility for us. The most important thing is to continue that kind of practice and to have successor who may take our responsibility, who may share our responsibility.

¹ Gyokujun So-on.

² Of the Rinso-in temple in Japan.

The point is, you know [laughs], somewhere, you know, which you don't expect. If you understand this point, you know, you will understand what kind of life you should have and what kind of rules you have to observe. To have rules is not just for yourself, it—but, you know, for your friends and for your disciples who may succeed our spirit. You know, as a bodhisattva it is a pleasure to have something to work on, to have—we bodhisattvas should welcome difficulties, and if there is—so if you are very kind to your followers—successors, you should leave something for themselves [laughs]—some difficulties [laughs] for your descendant. Then, as a bodhisattva, he may be very glad to have something to work on. So not only, you know, your lifetime, but also forever for our descendant we should welcome the difficulties.

Do you know a bodhisattva's four vow? I explain many times, I think: If desires are inexhaustible, you know—inexhaustible—why we should, you know [laughs]—it doesn't make sense to have a vow to get rid of—it doesn't make sense, you know. But for a bodhisattva, you know, bodhisattva may like [laughs] endless, you know, desires which you should work on [laughs, laughter]. We understand in that way.

You had, you know, you have dead angle on this point. You don't notice this point, so you don't, you know, have much sense in your practice [laughs]. Why you are—you are discouraged, you know, with your practice is—the point is wrong. You are just working for yourselves [laughs]. You are very, you know, short-sighted—near-sighted. You don't see anything. And [you] practice zazen, so you are—you will be easily discouraged when you sit everyday with pain, with many difficulties.

The human life is interesting because there is good thing and bad things, half and half—well, you know, very well mixed up [laughs], you know. So if there is only good things, the—our life will not be so interesting [laughs, laughter], because we have something, you know, some difficulties, sometime some joy. So joy makes sense, difficulties make sense.

And the world we live is called Nan-enbudai,³ and there is the world called Hokkuro-shū⁴ in Buddhist, you know, parable, where there is only joy. So Dōgen-zenji says we should be very glad to be born in this world [Nan-enbudai], where there is many difficulties. If we were to be born in Hokkuro-shū, we will not have Buddhist teaching.⁵ We cannot listen to Buddha because there is no need [laughs] for Buddha to exist because

³ Nan-enbudai (or Nan-enbushū) (Jap.) (Skt. Jambudvipa): The southern of the four continents surrounding Mount Sumeru (or Meru) that comprise one world or planet in traditional Buddhist cosmology. It is the human world.

⁴ Hokkuro-shū (Jap.) (Skt. Uttarakuru): The northern of the four continents surrounding Mount Sumeru (or Meru) that comprise one world or planet in traditional Buddhist cosmology.

⁵ The inhabitants of Hokkuro-shū are so happy that they feel no need for Buddhist practice.

they have no trouble there. But I don't think we are very happy if we—if human being were to be born in Hokkuro-shū.

I don't want to talk about this point so much. It is too valuable to talk about, unless you pay million dollars. I—I [laughs, laughter] don't want to talk about it. I feel in that way. But, you know, because tonight I have nothing to talk about [laughs, laughter], so, you know [laughs], I have to say something [laughs, laughter]. So I am giving you, you know, my secret treasure. But, you know, I hope you will not understand it [laughs, laughter]. You should understand it after ten, fifteen years, you know, not—not now, because you may understand it just by hear, you know. "Oh," you may say, "that makes sense." That's all. Maybe, you know, this kind of thing is something you should find out.

My master [So-on] just said, you know, "This is—this main building⁶ is for you to mend it—for your disciples to mend it." That is what he said. I didn't take it so seriously. "What does he mean?" [Laughs.] Because of it I couldn't come to America, you know, until my age of 54. When I made up my mind to go to America, it was the year I accomplished—I made up my mind to come to America in October, and I finished my work of main building April.

So when I—when I made up my mind to go to America, I said to my members—one of my members, if I could go to America ten years, you know, before—ten years ago, I had—I could have many things. I had—I—I think I can many things—I think I could [have done] many things, but maybe it is too late. I cannot—I forgot almost all the English. Even though I have some spirit, it will not work properly [laughs]. I—I regret.

But on the other hand, I thought, if I—if I had gone to America ten years before, I wouldn't have, you know, this much understanding of Buddhism. So maybe it was good thing for me to stay in Japan, doing something which was told by—by my master.

So point of practice is something beyond accomplishment or success. Successful or unsuccessful is not the point. What kind of accomplish you have—accomplishment you have in not point. It doesn't matter. But the point is if your practice is—the quality of practice is good or bad, good or not-so-good. That is why Buddhism, you know, lasted for so long time. As Buddha pointed out, in maybe 1000 and—1500 years Buddhism will die out—not die out but almost, you know, dead teaching.

It is true, you know. If Buddhist seek for the accomplishment, when we, you know, continue our practice if you are not, you know—if you continue your practice, if you—if you are not so good, your disciple may be good, you know. In three or four generation after you, there must be some good disciple if your practice is pure enough and your practice is good

⁶ Of the temple Rinso-in in Japan.

quality. Some of your descendant will do something, even though you cannot do it. That is very important point for us.

Our practice is not just for ourselves. It is for everyone. And so, you know, it doesn't matter whether you are successful or not. It doesn't matter. If you—if—if you have, you know, good disciples and if you have good practice, that is the most important point.

And everyone can have good practice, you know. This kind of spirit is the spirit everyone has. This kind of spirit is not just for selected people. It is every—for everyone. The important thing is to continue it, you know, to continue the good practice. Then someone will do it. Do you understand [laughs] this point?

So that is why we say our practice should not be selfish practice. Even though you accomplish something great, if it is selfish practice, we will despise it. [Laughs.] Do you understand? If you don't do anything—if you are not able to do anything, if your practice is with people and for your friend and for your descendant, even though he—he cannot do anything, he may be a good Buddhist. Okay? Don't say okay [laughs] too—too soon. Think about it, you know.

Dōgen-zenji said, you know—when he wrote *Shōbōgenzō*, he said, you know, "Although they may not understand me," you know, "it is all right. Anyway I will write it down [laughs]. Someday someone will understand it. So for my descendant I am writing this *Shōbōgenzō*, giving up various chance to accomplish something [that] seems to be great." His point was there. That is why, you know, there is Sōtō school. Even though we understand *Shōbōgenzō*, you know, one character—even though I—we understand *Shōbōgenzō* intellectually, if we lose this point, it doesn't make any sense.

Even though all American people converted to [laughs] Buddhism, it doesn't make sense. If we—if there is ten or twenty good students, that is enough. Our way is for everyone—not for some e- [partial word]—some particular person, for everyone who may participate [in] our way. Don't say, you know, there is nothing to do for me as a Buddhists. There are many things to do for you. And this is the foundation of, I think, foundation of Buddhism and foundation of practice.

As this practice is for everyone, or—how it works, this teaching works as everyone's teaching is because it is enough if each one of us do something which he can: great or small, doesn't matter. We say if it is some equipment in the kitchen, you know, there is pan and cups and bowls and many things, spoons and everything. We need everything. Whether it is big or small doesn't matter. Small thing is necessary as well as big ones. But we must, you know—small things should work when small thing is necessary. Big one should work when big one is necessary. If small pan

want to be a big one [laughs], it will be big trouble. And something which you should put higher place, you know, should be put—should be higher—high place, and something which should be low place, should be low place. That is, you know, famous Dōgen's words: *Kōjō kōhe. Teijo tehei.*

That is rules, you know. Rule is not something which was made by some particular person. The moment we are here, there is rules already. And each one have its own place, and each one has its own place—and each one of us has its own position. According to the position we should work. That is how we practice our way in everyday life. In this way, if we work together, that is, you know, our monastery. That is monastic life. And which will last forever. And its gate should be open to everyone. And everyone must have some position, something to do there, with the same spirit. And our life—our monastic life should be continued forever, and that is, you know, how our monastery works. And that is, you know, why we practice zazen with painful [laughs] legs.

Mm-mm-mm. Excuse me [laughs, laughter]. Oh my! I thought it was too short, but it was too long [laughs, laughter]. Okay, excuse me.

Let's work hard with joy, you know, and participate [in] the big practice, you know. This is our joy, actually, you know. Don't say, "What am I doing here?" [Laughs.] You know, don't say so anymore if you understand this. And how valuable thing it is to have something to work on, to kee- [partial word]—to have something to keep you busy [laughs, laughter]. I am not fooling you at all [laughs, laughter].

Thank you very much.

Source: City Center transcript entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997.
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