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Shikantaza, *zazen*, is—our *zazen* is just to be ourselves. Just to be ourselves. We should not expect anything, you know, just to be ourselves. And continue this practice forever. That is our way, you know. Even, we say, even in, you know (what do you say?) [laughs], even in, you know [snaps fingers], [student: "Snap of the fingers?"] [laughs, laughter], you know, in snapping your fingers there are millions of *kalpas*—no, *cetanās*.¹ The unit of time. You know, we say "moment after moment," but in your actual practice, moment is too long, you know. If we say "moment," you know, or "one breathing after another," you still involved in—your mind still involved in, you know, following breathing, you know, to follow breathe. We say "to follow breathe," "to follow our breathing," but the feeling is, you know, in each, you know—to live in each moment.

If you live in each moment, you do not expect anything. With everything, you know, you become you yourself. If you, you know, feel strictly yourself [your self?], without any idea of time even, you know, in smallest particle of time you feel yourself [your self?]. That is *zazen*.

Why we say so is if we are involved in idea of time, various desires will, you know, start to act some mischiefs [laughs]—they will become mischievous, you know. So—but if you, you know—when you have no idea of time, with everything, you know, you bec- [partial word]—your practice will go on and on.

So this practice is not so easy. Maybe you cannot continue this practice for even for one day, one period. If you try to continue it one period, you know, you must make a big effort. So what will you do, then, rest of the time of your five days is to extend this feeling for each period, or to prepared for, you know, for this *shikantaza*. Maybe that is what you can do, and this preparation, or to extend the practice to another period of time, eventually will be extended to everyday life. So everyday life—how you practice or how you extend our practice is to expose yourself as you are, you know. You shouldn't try to be someone else [laughs]. You should be very honest with yourself, and you express yourself fully. And you should be brave enough to express yourself, whatever, you know, people may say, you know. It is all right. You should be just yourself, at least, at least for your teacher, you know. You should be just yourself.

¹ *kalpa* (Sanskrit) or *kappa* (Pāli): "world-period"; an inconceivably long period of time; an aeon. *cetanā* (Sanskrit): "volition" or "don't think."

Until your teacher may say, "Okay, in that way you should continue your practice," you know. Until your teacher say so, you should try hard. And after your teacher said, "Okay, now you should continue that practice," you know, "forever. You don't need me anymore," you know. That is, you know, actual practice, actual life of you. This is, you know, rather difficult unless you trust your teacher. Rather difficult, you know. But if you find out your teacher's spirit is the same spirit as you have, then you will be brave enough to continue this kind of practice.

Sometime you have to, you know, argue with your teacher—[laughs] sometime. That is okay. You should do that. But you should be ready to give up your argument, you know, when you are wrong, when you find out yourself, you know, sticking to some viewpoint [laughs] foolishly, you know, sticking to only one viewpoint. Or when you are making some excuse, you should give up. That is how you should—how to be honest with yourself. You should give up, you know: "I surrender. Okay." [Laughs.] "I am sorry." [Laughs.]

If you cannot accept what he says, you know, until you can accept him you should try to understand your teacher. For teacher and for you, what we should do is to perfect—to have perfect communication, you know. We should try to have perfect communication. So for a teacher, you know, the important point is, you know, always ready to surrender [laughs] to your disciple, you know. If teacher thinks, you know, he was wrong, he should say, "Oh, you are right. I was wrong." [Laughs.] If, you know, your teacher has that kind of spirit, you should have same spirit, you know. That is not so easy. You may think it is easy. If you continue this kind of practice, sometime people may think he is crazy [laughs]. Something wrong with him [laughs]. But doesn't matter.

We are not same, you know. Each one of us [is] different from the other. So each one has, you know, each one's problem. So, you know, it is okay. Anyway, you should be yourself. You should not, you know— Fortunately, you have Zen Center here, you know. Advantage of Zen Center for you is—Zen Center is not shade for you, shade which will protect you, you know. It is—it is not umbrella [laughs]. But, you know, there you can, you know, you can have, you know, real practice, you know. You can express yourself fully.

And you should open your eyes to, you know, appreciate other's practice, you know. You should, you know, you should be able to communicate with each other without words. Your mind—your eyes should be open to see other's practice. It does not mean to criticize others, but to appreciate or to know others.

That is why we have, you know, rules or rituals. You may say, you know, if you are practicing zazen, no one knows, you know, no one understand your practice [laughs], but, you know, when you are practicing, it—you know, for me, it is, you know, easiest chance to understand you. Especially from the—if you—if I see from your back, you know, it is very easy to understand what kind of practice you have. So that is [why] sometime walk around [the zendo], not to hit—not to hit you [laughs] but to see you [laughs]. Very interesting [laughs, laughter].

If you are, you know, dancing or talking [laughs] or making big noise, it is rather difficult to understand you [laughs]. If you are reciting sutra, you know, each one has each one's own voice [laughs] and in the way you recite sutra is different. And it is, you know, easy to know with each other, even though you are not trying to understand. But if you practice together, eventually, you know, naturally you will be a good friend. Sometime because you know with each other [laughs], you know too well [laughs], so you—there your have some difficulty because of your small mind. But as long as your mind is big enough to expose yourself and to accept others, if you practice, you know, zazen or rituals together, then you will be a good friend.

And another point is already we have free from idea of time. You shouldn't, you know, try to be ordained, or you shouldn't worry how long you should, you know, stay layman. Or if you become priest, you shouldn't worry what will be your next step. When you are lay student, as a lay student you should, without expecting to be something, you should, you know, [be] honest with yourself. Because you try to be someone else, you lose your practice and you lose your virtue. When you try to be—when you are faithful to your, you know, position or to your work, your true being of you is there. This is a very important point.

Zen Center is, you know, community, and those who come and sit is also, actually even though they are not a member, actually they are our member. We do—even though we do not call them "member," but in its true sense they are also our member. When they come for the first time to Zen Center it may be difficult for them to know what we are doing. But more and more, they will feel what we are doing and join our practice. So those who knows, who are practicing our way, should give them some idea of practice or feeling of practice. The best way to, you know, to give the feeling of practice is to have the feeling to—each one have our feeling fully. Then naturally people who come will feel it. But if our practice is wrong, you know, they will—what they will feel is something completely, you know, different from the proper feeling a Buddhist must have.

Why wrong feeling is created is because we, you know, we have—we are involved in selfish practice. I said don't have no idea of time, you know. Why I say so is if you [are] involved in idea of time—today or next year, you know, or tomorrow—idea of, you know, selfish practice will start from there. It is all right to have idea of time, but that is the extended practice of non-selfish practice on this moment, to express ourselves.

We don't know what will happen in—on each moment. So if you fail to express yourself fully, then you will regret [it] later. Because you expect some other time, you fail to express yourself fully. And you will be misunderstood by your friend. So you should be always express yourself fully. That is why we observe—we eat in some certain way. You may think, you know, in that way you cannot express yourself, but it is not so, you know. Because you have some way to, you know, serve, you know, you can express yourself—how much sincerity you have.

If there is no way, you know, the way is—if you have many ways of expressing yourself, you know, you don't know how to do it. So if you know how to do it, you know, you can express yourself in that way. It is big mistake if you think you cannot express, you know. If you want to express yourself, it may be, you know, the best way is to do something whatever you want to do. You may, you know, do, you know, exactly how you feel, you know, superficial feeling, you know, just choosing some way, you know. Because you or when you don't know what to do. Oh, you know, this is not [laughs], you know, you are not expressing yourself. If you know what to do exactly and you do [it] then you can, you know, express yourself fully.

So in that way, strong person express himself [in a] very strong way [laughs], and, you know, kind person will express himself, you know, very kindly, doing same thing, you know. When you pass [out] the sutra card, you know, from this end to the other end, you know, each one, you know, pass it [laughs] each one's own way. So if I see it, you know, it is easy to see, you know, because they do it same way. If they do it different way, you know, it is very difficult to know. Because you do, you know, it—all of you doing same way from this corner to the other [laughs], it is easy to see [laughs]. And because you repeat, you know, same thing over and over again, so everyone can understand, you know, your friend's way, you know. Eventually, though you shut your eyes, if you [laughs]—"Oh," [laughs] "that was Katherine." [Laughs, laughter.]

That is advantage of, you know, having rules and rituals. Or else, you know, your understanding or your relationship with people—without this kind of understanding, your understanding of people will be very superficial, you know. If someone wear beautiful [rubs own robe], you

know, robe you think he is a good priest [laughs]. You know, if someone give you some beautiful thing, you think he is very kind to you [laughs], you know. That kind of understanding is very superficial. If he think [bring?], you know, a beautiful thing, you know, you think she is good person [laughs]. That kind of understanding is not, you know, good understanding. Very superficial.

Usually, you know, our system of the society is built up [in] some superficial, frivolous way, you know, always changing. What, you know, the controlling power will be money or something, you know, a big noise [laughs, laughter]. That is, you know, controlling power because our eyes, our ears are not open, [not] subtle enough to see things, and we are—our feeling is very, you know, dull.

Most people who visit Zen Center may feel Zen Center is very strange place [laughs]. "They do not talk so much. They do not even laugh." [Laughs.] "What are they doing?" [Laughs, laughter.] But we, you know, actually, you know, without talking so much, we can communicate. We don't say, you know, we don't smile always, but we can feel others' feeling, and our mind is always open, and we are behaving exactly, you know, behaving—expressing ourselves fully. Actually, you know, even though you are not trying to express yourself, you are expressing yourself anyway [laughs]. If your mind is open, you can see. Those who are accustomed to, you know, big noise, you know, cannot see anything here—that's all.

We should extend this kind of practice to city life, and we must have more friend, so that we can be—all of us can be a good friend of each other, of others. It is not difficult thing when you decide to be honest with yourself and to express yourself fully, without expecting anything. Just to, you know, be yourself and ready to understand others—that is how you extend our practice to everyday life.

But it is not so easy to be free from the selfish practice. So even for one hour a day, we should try to sit *shikantaza*, without moving, without expecting anything, as if you are, you know, in the last minute. Moment after moment, you know, you feel your last minute. Inhaling—in each inhaling and in each exhaling there is countless, you know, units of time, and you should live in each unit of time.

And smoothly exhaling first, and then inhaling. When you, you know—Calmness of your mind is beyond the end of your exhaling. And if you exhale in that way, smoothly, without even trying to exhale, you are going to the, you know, complete calmness of—you are entering into the complete perfect calmness of your mind. You do not exist anymore, you know. And if you enter the complete calmness of your mind, then naturally, you know, your exhaling will start from there. And all the blood you have will be, you know, cleaned, catching every,

you know, everything from outside, and that fresh blood carrying everything from outside and pervade your body and refresh your body. You are completely refreshed. And you start to exhale, to extend that fresh feeling to the emptiness. You exhale. So, moment after moment, without trying [to do] anything, you continue *shikantaza*.

Complete *shikantaza* may be difficult because of your pain in your legs. But even though you have pain in your legs, you can do that. Even though your practice is not good enough, you can do that. So you—your breathing—with your breathing, you know, you will vanish gradually. You will fade into the emptiness. And natural inhaling ... [Tape turned over.] [will bring back]² ... bring back to yourself with some color or form. And your exhaling, again, with your exhaling, you gradually fade into emptiness—empty white paper. That is *shikantaza*.

I'm just explaining, you know, the feeling of *shikantaza*. So when you—important point of *shikantaza* will be, you know, in, you know, in your inhaling. You, you know—important point is—excuse me—exhaling. Instead of trying to feel yourself, but try to fade in emptiness when you exhale.

When you have this practice in your last moment, you have nothing to [be] afraid of. You are actually, you know, aiming at emptiness, empty area. There is no other way for you to have a feeling of immortality—or mortality, oh, excuse me, mortality. You become one with everything after you exhale—completely exhale—with this feeling. If you are still alive, naturally you will, you know, inhale again. "Oh" [laughs, laughter], "I'm still alive!" [Laughs, laughter.] "Fortunately or unfortunately!" So you start to exhale and try to fade into emptiness. This is, you know—you don't know, maybe [laughs], what kind of feeling it is. But some of you will know it. By some chance you must have felt this kind of feeling.

When you have this practice, you know, you cannot be angry so easily [laughs]. Because you are interested in inhaling, you know, more than exhaling [laughs], you become angry quite easy [laughs]. You are trying to [be] alive always, you know. My friend, you know, wrote on newspaper the other day. He had heart attack, and what he could do was just exhaling. He couldn't take inhale. That was terrible feeling [laughs], he said. But if he, you know, could try to exhale, you know, at that moment as if we exhale, you know, aiming for emptiness, you know, then I think he didn't feel so bad. To have exhale is great, you know, joy for us, rather than inhaling. But he, you know, he tried to, you know, inhale—take another inhale, you know. He thought he cannot take inhale anymore—inhaling anymore. But if he could try to,

² The text in brackets is from a note on the back of the original tape case.

you know, exhale as we do, then, you know, more easily I think he could take another inhaling.

So exhaling is very important for us. So to die is more important than to try to [be] alive. Because we always try to [be] alive, so we have trouble. Instead of trying to [be] alive or active, if we try to be calmer and die or fade away into emptiness, then, you know, naturally we will be taken care of. Buddha will take care of us. Because we lose mother's, you know, bosom [laughs], we are not anymore her children, you know. So if we like, you know, the emptiness like we, you know, like we, you know, feel your mother's bosom, then mother will take care of you. The moment after moment, you shouldn't lose this kind of, you know, practice when you practice, you know, *shikantaza*.

Various secret of religious practice is in this point. When they [Jodo-shū] say, "*Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu*,"³ you know, they wanted to be Amida Buddha's children. "*Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu*," you know. That is how they repeat Amida Buddha's name in their practice. Same thing is true with our zazen practice. Zazen practice is not different from their practice. If you know how to practice *shikantaza*, and if they know how to practice—how to repeat, excuse me, Amida Buddha's name, cannot be different, you know, as long as Amida Buddha's, you know, their practice is Buddhism. As a Buddhist, we have same practice in different way.

So we can, you know, enjoy, we are free, you know. We feel free to express ourselves, because we are ready to fade, you know, into emptiness. If you are trying to, you know, to be active and special and trying to do something, you know, you cannot express yourself. Small self will be expressed, but big self does not appear from the emptiness. From the emptiness, only great self will appear. That is *shikantaza*, okay? [Laughs, laughter.] Not so difficult [laughs] if you try, if you really try.

Thank you very much.

Sources: City Center transcript and notes on back of original tape case. Entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997. Transcript checked against tape and made verbatim by Bill Redican (12/28/00).

³ "Veneration to Buddha Amida" or "Veneration to the Buddha of Boundless Light."