

SUMMER *SESSHIN*
SECOND NIGHT LECTURE
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Tassajara

This lecture was the source for the chapter of *Not Always So* called "Stand Up by the Ground" on p. 139.

We have been talking about reality, actually, and how we practice our way in our zazen and in our everyday life. And Dōgen-zenji talked about reality by using the Japanese or Chinese word, *inmo*.¹ *Inmo* has two meanings. It means like this [gestures]—and also it means question: "What is that?" Or it is "it." "It" means—sometimes it is question mark, and sometimes "it" means—pointing at something, we say, "it."

In English you say, "It is hot." That "it" is the same word—same meaning when you say, "It is nine o'clock," or "It is half-passed eight." You use "it" for time or weather. Time or weather is "it." But not only time or weather. Everything should be "it"—can be "it." We are also "it," but we don't say "it." Instead of "it" we say "he" or "she," or "me" or "I." But actually it means "it." So if everything is "it," it is—at the same time, question mark. When I say "it," you don't know [laughs] exactly what I mean, so you may ask, "What is it?" [laughs].

"It" does not mean some definite, special thing, as when we talk about time. It does not mean some special time, or meal time, or lecture time. We don't know. So "it" may be question mark for everyone. If I say "it," you may say, "What time is it?"

So "it" or *inmo* has two meanings: some definite thing is "it," and at the same time "it" may be a question. And this is very important for us to know. "It" has always two sides: "It is hot now, but it may be sometime cold" [laughs]. "Right now it is hot, but it is not always hot. Sometime it will be cold."

When we talk about time, "it" means some special time. But at the same time it means some continuous time. Time is continuous thing, and, at the same time, time is some special, definite, discontinuous—some certain hour. When we say it is half-passed eight, we point out at some certain time. At that time, time means discontinuity. But time, by nature, it is something continuous, so one word has two sides: continuity and discontinuity. That is the nature of reality to us.

So we have been talking about things tonight in terms of some special

¹ Suzuki-rōshi is commenting on Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* "Inmo" (also spelled "Immo").

discontinuous, specialized being which has form or color. That is *inmo*.

But Dōgen-zenji again talks about our practice in terms of something continuous, not special—something which is mixed up [laughs] with everything. If we are not ready to discuss things, we will not have a complete understanding of our teaching. As he says: "Those who fell on the ground should stand up by the ground—by the earth."² I don't know if it makes some sense to you. What do you say? "To fell on the ground"—"to fell," or—?

Student: Fall.

Another student: Fall on the ground.

Suzuki-rōshi: Hmm?

Student: Fall on the ground?

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm. Yeah. Like this [probably gestures]. Fall on the ground? Should stand up by the earth—by the ground at that place. And he also says, "If you fall on the ground, you should stand up"—what should I say? It is rather difficult—"by emptiness [laughs], by nothing." Actually we stand up by the ground like this [probably gestures], but he says we shouldn't stand up by the ground. What does it mean? It means if you think you can stand up by the ground always, it would be a big mistake. If you rely on the ground and don't mind to fall on the ground, you will fall on the ground quite easily. "It's all right. I can stand up by the ground." [Laughs.] So he said you shouldn't think you can stand up on the ground—by the ground.

This point is important. It is like enlightenment. If you rely on enlightenment, and practice zazen, it is someone who easily make mistake or fall on the ground, relying on the help of the ground. Do you understand? It is rather subtle. Do you understand? There is very subtle point. To stand up by the ground—of course we have to stand up by the ground at the time, but if you stick to the idea of help of the ground all the time, you lose the true meaning of "fall on the ground." In other words, we should not make the same mistake [laughs] many many times. You may think, even though you make some mistake, it is all right. We know how to get up.

That is not what we mean when we say "reality." Things do not happen many times in the same way. It doesn't even happen the same way twice. But if we say, if you fall on the ground, you should stand up by the ground, then you will have this kind of idea: "Okay, I

² Quoting Dōgen in *Shōbōgenzō* "Inmo," who in turn quoted the fourth Indian patriarch Upagupta in *Keitoku Dentōroku* (*Keitoku Era Record of the Transmission of the Light*), Chapter 1.

know how to stand up, so it's all right, even though I fall on the ground by mistake." With this kind of prejudice or easy idea, if we practice our way that is wrong practice.

You recite each time in lecture, "Even in one hundred *kalpas* of time, you cannot meet with the teaching." That is true. Truth is true only when you listen to it. And when you try to repeat what someone said, that is not truth anymore. When he said so, it is true. When someone said so, it is true because the ground already has two meanings. It is at that time ground, but ground can be a stick sometime, can be a stone sometime, can be water sometime.

Ground is "it." "It" means everything, not just ground. It means that you should renew your way of practice. Each time you practice, you must have fresh new feeling. With fresh and new feeling, you should practice our way. Try not to have the same experience. Your experience of practice should be always new, and should be always "it." It should not be some definite particular experience.

So there is nothing to rely on in our practice. But on the other hand, there is always something provided for you. Always. According to the circumstances, you will have some aid to practice our way. Even pain in your legs is help. By the pain you have, you should practice our way. The pain is "it." It is, at that time, some definite experience or definite trouble or thing. "It" can be drowsiness [laughs]; "it" can be hunger; "it" can be hot weather. So hot weather or cool weather—nice and cool weather, or hunger, or mosquito [laughs], or pain in your legs can be an aid of your practice by which you can stand up—establish your practice.

Not only Buddha's teaching, but also everything can be aid of practice. So we say *inmo*. *Inmo-ji*. *Inmo-ji* means "things."³ And those who practice zazen are also *inmo-nin*. *-Nin* means "person." *-Nin* in Japanese means "person." *Inmo-nin*—"someone practicing something." That is reality. [Laughs.] Even though you are practicing actually, right here, but in its true sense you should understand "someone practicing something." Or "someone doing something." Not only practice. "Someone doing something."

So if it is so, "doing" is not necessary. "Someone" and "doing" and "something" is same thing. Doing—someone which will practice zazen, include everything. He cannot be separated from this world. And some action cannot exist without

³ Suzuki-rōshi defined *ji* in a later *Sandōkai* lecture: "*Ji* refers to the phenomenal—to something you can see, hear, smell, or taste as well as to objects of thought or ideas. Whatever can be introduced into our consciousness is *ji*" (*Branching Streams Flow in the Darkness*, p. 53; also SR-70-06-01, p. 3).

background of whole world. Something cannot be special thing from this world, so "something, something, something." [Laughs, laughter.] Then, what is that? That is complete realization. So everything happens in that way. If you understand—stick to the idea of help or experience or enlightenment, that is already mistake.

As I am Sōtō [laughs]—Sōtō—I belong to Sōtō. If I say so: "Oh, he denies enlightenment experience." [Laughs.] It is not so. We Sōtō students do not stick to one thing. We don't stick to anything. We should have always freedom. In Japanese we say *shusshin—shusshin-no-katsuro*:⁴ complete freedom. Complete freedom of practice, complete freedom of expression. Our practice is expression—a vivid expression of our true nature or reality.

So for us it is not possible to stick to anything. So one after another, we have to practice our way in a quite renewed area and quite refreshed way. And our practice should be independent from past practice and future practice. We cannot sacrifice our practice for future attainment, because all the buddhas who attained enlightenment in this way, and all the buddhas in future will attain enlightenment in this way. "In this way" means [laughs]—"this," means "not any"—I do not mean Sōtō way or Rinzai way. Sometime Sōtō way. Sometime Rinzai way. Sometime some other school's way, according to the circumstances. How we attain enlightenment will be different. Someone will attain enlightenment when he sees some flower or hears some sound like bamboo. Or someone may attain enlightenment when they take hot bath [laughs, laughter] there.

There were many kinds of people in Buddha's sangha. There were twelve disciples who came from a rich family. And Bhadrāpala Bodhisattva,⁵ who attained enlightenment in a hot bath, is [laughs] one of the boys who came from very rich family. Rich and poor may attain enlightenment in various ways: in hot bath, in rest room [laughs]. There is no Sōtō way or Rinzai way, actually. So we say "it." And "it"—that "it" means two sides. "It" has two sides: positive side and negative side.

⁴ *shusshin-no-katsuro* (Jap.): Literally, "the absolute way beyond enlightenment itself."

⁵ Suzuki-rōshi is referring to Bhadrāpala's reply to Shākyamuni Buddha's question in the *Shūrangama Sūtra*. Shākyamuni: "Through which expedient did you enter *samādhi*?" Bhadrāpala: "Once, when it was time for the Sangha to bathe, I followed the custom and entered the bathhouse. Suddenly I awakened to the fact that water does not wash away the dust, nor does it cleanse the body. And in that moment I became peaceful and attained the state of there being nothing at all... . The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, touch is the foremost means" (Vol. 5, Part 1, Buddhist Text Translation Society).

In short, what do we mean? We discuss in a very abstract way, so that discussion includes various ways of practice. But in short, what it means is: whatever it is, we should accept. And by means of various things, we should practice our way. And there is no other way to attain enlightenment.

Do you have some question? It may be rather difficult to make question [laughing], because it is like to catch fish by net. We say something in this way so that you cannot escape from it. It is lucky to catch a fish by net. After throwing net: "Is there some question?" doesn't mean much, but you escaped from the net. Okay.

Student A: When I fall down on the ground, who is it that makes effort to get up?

Suzuki-rōshi: You. Or Buddha.

Student A: I have a problem—or it feels like it. Whenever I make effort, it seems to come from some sense of "I," maybe some pride or some very strong sense of self. Could you tell us about effortless effort?

Suzuki-rōshi: Effortless effort. Effortless effort means the effort, knowing that there is no "I" or no ground, and then something which is going with everything is effortless effort. The effort you make is not your effort, because there is no "you." What is that effort? That effort comes out from your mother body of whole being.

That you stand up means that everyone stands up, and everyone feels very good when you stand up. And when you attain enlightenment, everyone attains enlightenment with you. So if the practice does not include every one of us, it is not true practice, we say. It is tainted practice by the idea of self. And you may have this kind of doubt, after you do something, as whether this is selfish things or not: "Why did I do this?" I think you will have some uncertain feeling about what you do or what you did. I suffered from it [laughs] pretty much.

Especially when you do something good—supposed to be good, you suffer more [laughs]. When you did something by mistake, you don't suffer. "This is by mistake, so I will not make same mistake again." That's all. But if you try to do something good—or you did something which is supposed to be good—because you did something with some idea of good and bad, you suffer more. Especially by the idea of good, you suffer more [laughs]—you should suffer more [laughs]. That is good experience. Okay.

Student B: Rōshi, I'm walking along, and everything's intact [laughter], and then I—

Suzuki-rōshi: Walking?

Student B: I'm walking along, and everything seems to be okay, and then *thud!*—I'm on the ground. I look around, and there's a small rock. So with a roar, I can pick up the rock and throw it off into the woods. But what if the rock is so big I can't lift it? So what am I going to do?

Suzuki-rōshi: [Laughing.] Rock is so big?

Student B: Yeah. It's stuck in the ground and I can't pick it up.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. No need to take it out. [Laughs, laughter.]

Student B: But I feel some need to take it out—some strong need. [Loud laughter.]

Suzuki-rōshi: That's deep ego [laughing]—too big. Your ego is too big. I thought if the rock is a great big one, it is more beneficial to stand up by it. Small rocks will not help you so much, but if it is so big, it is easy to stand up by it. If you stand up, you should walk off the rock. And there is no need to take it away.

Actually, your problem is when you feel guilty—when you feel guilty is the point. After you did something, you feel selfish. But before you feel selfish, you didn't feel anything. But after you did something, you start to feel bad. So when you did it, it was all right. But after you did it, and when you think about it, the way you think about it is not right. Do you understand? When you did it, you were not selfish. But when you think about it, you became already selfish. You expect something to be good. So don't think too much about what you did. Okay? If you think too much about what you did, most of the time, it is, maybe, conscientious thing, but sometimes very selfish idea is involved in it. So one after another, you should continue your practice without thinking, without being involved in so much selfish idea or dualistic idea. Okay? [*Sentence finished. Tape turned over.*]

I suffered a lot about it when I was at school. And I was staying at a dormitory. The restroom was always dirty [laughs]—dormitory restroom was always dirty. So I made up my mind to clean it. But I didn't want to clean it when people see [laughing]. So I get up early in the morning before they get up so that no one can find me cleaning restroom.

It was pretty good for several days, but even though early in the morning someone get up [laughs]. I have very difficult time to hide myself [laughs, laughter] while doing this kind of thing. Sometimes

our dean, the head of the college or university—whatever it is—Nukariya⁶ is his name—he was very strict person. And he stayed in our dormitory with students [laughs]. And Saturday night was the night when he goes home. He was so strict, in summertime when all the students went home, he would stay at dormitory, taking care of things. So most people who visited the dormitory to see him, thought he was a garbage man [laughs] on the dormitory. He was pretty good.

And sometime I saw a light in his room. I was very much scared of [laughing] him coming to the restroom. So as soon as I saw the light in the dormitory, not only his room but also some room, I escaped from the restroom, and I was quite upset or—I don't know what to say. I was very much mixed up. At first, I felt very good. And more and more, I had many things to think about. And I have too much to think about. So finally I have to think whether I should continue it or give up. But my nature—I was pretty stubborn. I didn't like to give up something so easily. So I wanted to continue it, but I didn't want to have that kind of silly problems. But anyway I continued it.

I studied psychology. And the professor talked about our psychology. He said it is not possible to have the same experience again. Even though you think you did this kind of thing, but what you think about it and what you have experienced is not same—different, quite different. Actually you cannot have the same experience again, in its strict sense. It is not possible to have same feeling again or same experience again. So I was enlightened. "Okay! It is not possible to think about it, so forget about it, and I will try—I will continue to do it. Whatever happens, it is all right. And whatever they may say, that is all right." I continued my practice in that way, for I don't know how long.

So don't think too much about it. What you do is not selfish, but what you think—that you think about it is maybe selfish. So if you can forget all about it, you are not so selfish. *Hai*.

Student C [Bill Shurtleff]: I think I understand what you mean when you say that what we do is not selfish, in the way that it affects other people.

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh.

⁶ Kaiten Nukariya: president of Komazawa University, Tōkyō. He was Suzuki-rōshi's academic and thesis advisor at Komazawa. Nukariya's controversial book on Buddhism for laypeople, *Shoshin Mondō (Questions and Answers about True Faith)*, was released in 1926, the same year that Suzuki-rōshi came to Komazawa. While abroad, Nukariya wrote the first popular book on Zen in English, *The Religion of the Samurai* (1913).

Bill: But it seems like there are some problems which cause us pain directly, and we think about them because they cause us pain directly, for example, during eating. And I have a problem that keeps happening again and again. And I think about it very often—each time that it happens, and I can see it happening even before it happens. And it still happens. And it's a problem with eating—like things—there are certain things that if I eat them, I know they will cause me suffering.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm. Yeah. [Laughs.]

Bill: And every time that I eat them, I suffer. I get sick. There is an "I" afterwards who says: "You should never, ever eat that again [laughter] because every time that you've eaten it you've suffered and gotten sick." And yet, another "I" sees himself approaching that plate of food, and he can say, "eat it anyway." And then afterwards, the other "I" comes along and says, "Now, you see!" Twenty times—the same thing happens every time. And every time I think about it, and think about it, and think about it.

Suzuki-rōshi: That is karma. [Laughs, laughter.] Yeah, we have that kind of problem always. We know that this is not good. But—I don't know why, but something makes me doing something wrong. But, some people may say that is a kind of destiny—fate, or it is not so. You can improve it little by little. We have no idea of fate or karma in that way.

Bill: You emphasize accepting it, and my emphasis always seems to be on improving, and not doing it next time, rather than accepting it this time [student laughs].

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. But before you try to improve yourself, you have to accept it, or you have to see it clearly. If you have the idea of improvement first, you will miss the clear sight of the reality. So you have to see it first and try to improve it. *Hai*.

Student D: I get the feeling, after sitting here for the last few days I have a habit of sitting. And as I sit, I forget about it more. So it becomes a new habit. Maybe then that's sort of like an answer to Meg's⁷ question and Bill's⁸ question.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

Student D: It becomes a habit—a new habit. And you don't think about your habits.

⁷ Possibly Meg Gawler.

⁸ Definitely Bill Shurtleff (confirmed by voice).

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm. Yeah. Habit. Yeah. That is habit. But habit is very important in our practice. That is why we do same thing over and over again: to make some good habit. But difference between the habit, in usual sense, and our habit—good habit is we are trying to make something a habit. That something is the way to attain liberation. Usually habit is, habit of smoking, habit of drinking [laughs]—something—some habit directed to the other way.

So our habit is to be free from things, we have this kind of practice. By practicing, we will have habit of being relieved from everything, to have more freedom from everything. This kind of habit is—the nature of habit is different. Do you understand? We bow to the Buddha. We observe ceremonies in the same way over and over again. But this habit will result in complete freedom for you. Zazen practice will give you the power of being free from things. So if I use "habit" in usual sense, we practice our way to destroy various habits in its bad sense. Okay?

Student D: *Sesshin* seems to break some of my habits—thinking in the past of, say, my habit of overeating.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student D: And *sesshin* comes and I just cut it off, and it's gone for seven days. But at the end, there's always—I guess the longer I practice, the more I will be faced with this choice between keeping the habit broken or over-reacting. I think, "Well, seven days of not overeating! Wow!" [Laughs, laughter.]

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. Right. Yeah, that is very true. We say, "One hundred lectures [laughs] end in one poo." [Laughing, laughter throughout rest of paragraph.] What do you call it? After giving you one hundred times of lecture, and you make big poo—big one! That's worse—makes me worse. If I haven't given lectures to you it was all right. Because I gave lecture, to make poo makes me worse. That is not actually laughing matter [laughing].

Okay.

Source: City Center transcript entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997. Transcript checked against tape and made verbatim by Bill Redican (11/15/00). Tenshin Reb Anderson graciously recalled, from memory, Suzuki-rōshi's citation of Bhadrápala. Lightly edited for readability by Gordon Geist (9/18/06).