

## Shushogi, Sections 11–17

January Sesshin Lecture: Lecture A ,1 PM

Shushogi: Sections 11–17

Friday, January 21, 1966

Sokoji, San Francisco

The next chapter<sup>1</sup> which we will learn is about precepts. And this is a pretty difficult one, so before we study how to recite it, I want to explain it beforehand.

The precept observation is very important for Zen practice. If we eat too much, we cannot sit. If we do not have enough sleep, we cannot sit. So physically and mentally, you have to adjust your life so that you can sit. This is a very important point. Zen or Buddhism is actually the way of life, and way of life is the precepts. [Possible gap in recording.] To live is how to observe precepts. It is not some rules of 16 or 250 or 500. There must be an innumerable number of precepts. So, it is necessary for us to have full understanding of precepts and to make effort to observe precepts. So whenever a great Zen master or religious hero appears, precepts observation is emphasized by him. Or, before some great teacher appears, precepts observation always have been emphasized by many precedent masters. Before Dogen, there were several famous masters who emphasized precepts.

[Section 11] Next we should deeply respect the three treasures: the Buddha, the teaching, and the Buddhist community. In fair way or adversity, they deserve our respect.

Excuse me, maybe they have to be put in this way:

We should yearn to respect them and make offerings to them in fair way or adversity.

This is a literal translation. But here it says:<sup>2</sup>

They deserve our respect and offerings no matter where we wander from life to life.

This is more maybe advanced,—not literal but this expresses the meaning he meant.

We should yearn to respect them and make offerings to them in fair way or adversity. It was respect for the Buddha, the teaching, and the Buddhist community that was truly transmitted from India to China by the buddhas and patriarchs.

The Buddha and the sangha, and then the Buddhist community is also precepts observation. Those are how we practice Buddhism. So, how we practice Buddhism is to keep our precepts. Precepts is not just prohibitory precepts. We have three refuges, and three corrective precepts, and ten prohibitory precepts. This is three of the sixteen of Soto precepts or Dogen's precepts.

The three treasures will be understood in three ways, the manifested three treasures: the supreme one, his dharma, and his sangha. This is the manifested three treasures. And, maintaining three treasures—Buddha's images, sutras, and priests. Those are called “maintaining three treasures.” And one body, three treasures. Essentially Buddha. No body of Buddha. The harmonious body of Buddha. This is more philosophical understanding of the three treasures.

Anyway, we have to take refuge in the three treasures as long as we are Buddhist. And then it says:

[Section 12] If the unfortunate and virtueless cannot even hear of the Three Treasures, how can they make refuge in them? Do not take refuge in the spirits of the mountains or the ghosts of the dead, and worship not at heretical shrines. Such refuge seeking leads us away from salvation. Let us instead quickly take refuge in the Buddha, the teaching, and the Buddhist community, seeking there not only release from pain but complete enlightenment.

When we observe our precepts, may I ask you, with what mind [laughs] do you observe precepts? This kind of story is everywhere in Zen koans. “With what mind do you [laughs] observe those precepts?” This is a kind of tricky [laughs] question. “With what mind?” If you say, “With this kind of mind I observe precepts,” then it means your mind is separated from the observation of the precepts. Precepts are there, and your mind is here. That is dualistic understanding. The same thing will happen if you practice zazen with your mind. The same misunderstanding will happen to you.

Zen practice is a practice which happens within your mind [laughs]—within your big mind. Precepts observation is how our life goes in its true sense. That is precepts observation. Precepts—your life goes in that way automatically. That is precepts observation. So, if you think the precepts are some particular rules which were set by Buddha, that is wrong understanding. Precepts is the way of life recorded by a tape recorder [laughs, laughter] or printed on film [laughs]. That is precepts. If you take a recording of someone's speech, it will say something moment after moment. That is precepts.

So, if you say, “Printed, a movie, it's precepts,” that is wrong understanding. “Recorded voice is precepts.” That is wrong understanding. What I am saying, what I am doing, whatever it is [laughs], that is precepts. So as a Buddhist, it is quite natural for us to observe—to respect Buddha, or take refuge in Buddha and dharma and his sangha. In this way, precepts should be observed. In other words, it is sincere effort to make your life meaningful. This is precepts observation in its true sense.

Do not take refuge in the spirits of mountains or ghosts of the dead, and worship not the heretical shrines.

According to heretical understanding, we take refuge in something, which is different from

ourselves. That is a heretical understanding. That is not our understanding. According to our understanding, everything is within our mind. Our mind includes everything, and in our mind many things will take place. So, when we do not lose this mind, whatever happens to us, that is precept observation. When we are caught by dualistic or some objective existence or idea—and worship them, that is a heretical understanding. So, the spirit of the mountain or ghost of the dead, and to worship heretical shrines is not our way of observing precepts.

Such refuge-seeking leads us away from salvation. Let us instead quickly take refuge in the Buddha, the teaching, and the Buddhist community, seeking there not only release from pain but complete enlightenment.

When we have enlightenment, many things happen within enlightenment, within big mind. In this case, we call our activity “precepts observation.”

[Section 13] To take refuge in the Three Treasures, we must come with a pure heart or faith. To take refuge in the Three Treasures, we must come with pure faith. No matter whether at the time of the Buddha's appearance in the world or after his disappearance—we repeat with clasped hands and bowed head: “I take refuge in the Buddha. I take refuge in the teaching. I take refuge in the Buddhist community.” I take refuge in the Buddha because he is our great teacher. I take refuge in the teaching because of its curative effect. I take refuge in the Buddhist community because here we find wisdom and warmth. To become followers of Buddhism, we must uphold the Three Treasures. We must lay this foundation before receiving the moral precepts.

Before the observation of moral precepts, we have to take the three refuges. And this observation of taking refuge in the Buddha, and his teaching, and his community is included in the sixteen precepts.

[Section 14] The merit of the Triple Refuge will always ripen when responsive communion takes place between the trainee and the Buddha. Those who experience this communion—whether deva, dwellers in hell, or animals—will take this refuge. The embodied merit increases through the various stages of existence and ultimately leads to the highest right enlightenment. Buddha himself confirmed the merit of the Triple Treasures as supremely valuable and inconceivably profound. All living beings should therefore take this refuge.

[Section 15] Next we should accept the three collective pure precepts—embracing good behavior, and embracing good deeds, and embracing all beings and saving them. We should then accept the ten grave prohibitions:

Do not kill.

Do not steal.

Do not commit adultery.

Do not lie.

Do not sell liquor.

Do not bring up the faults of others.  
Do not boast and blame others.  
Do not withhold material and spiritual possessions.  
Do not become angry.  
Do not debase the Triple Treasures.

Those are ten prohibitory precepts. "Do not kill."

Those rules are not supposed to be manmade precepts like social rules, or customs, or rules of some special countries. It is something more than that. It is not manmade, but based on a universal truth of the universe. If so, it does just mean not to kill. Strictly speaking, we cannot kill anything [laughs]. You think you can do it, but it is impossible. When we realize this, we will not kill anything. We will not try to kill anything because it is impossible. This is one way of observing the precept "Do not kill." So "Do not kill" is not just a matter of forcing something on others or empowering a person to do something or formality observation. It is something more than that. If you realize this fact, that you cannot kill anything, then you will be free from dualistic activity of killing or not killing.

So "Do not kill" means to extend our life activity or our life. "Do not kill" means sometimes a lazy attitude, a lazy way of life. When you are lazy, or when you are not sincere enough in your practice, you are killing [laughs] Buddha. Buddha will not manifest itself. You are keeping Buddha within yourself without doing anything [laughs]. That is actually to kill Buddha or to kill something. "Not to kill" means to do something with sincerity. That is the fundamental way of observing precepts. So precepts observation is to do something with your utmost effort. That is how you observe those ten prohibitory precepts.

So, negative precepts and positive precepts observation is not different. This is the most important precept.

"Do not steal." When you find out you cannot kill anything, how is it possible to steal something from others? When you have everything, there is no need to steal something from others. When you have no idea of others, when you understand your life is something which happens in your mind, it is not possible to steal anything. That is actually a practice of zazen. When you practice zazen, you practice zazen with big mind—the mind which is not a matter of big or small [laughs], with your true mind. That is our practice of zazen. So the practice of zazen is not different from observation of the precepts.

"Do not steal. Do not commit adultery." You will not attach to what will be within your capacity. When you have some object of adultery, you commit adultery. But, when you do it as if your eyes break [laughs], that is not adultery. There is no need to be caught by some unchaste act.

"Do not lie." You cannot tell a lie, you know. Whatever you do, it expresses your true nature. So, you cannot tell a lie.

“Do not sell liquor,” or, you may say, “drugs.” “Liquor” means some intoxicating medicine or intoxicating teaching. Those are liquor. Even the Buddha's teaching, if you sell it [laughs], that is liquor. If you are caught by it, that is liquor. So not only wine or drugs, but also you should not sell anything [laughs]. Do you understand? You should not sell. It should be your life in its true sense. This is a very important precept for us, and subtle understanding is necessary.

Do you know *sake*? Japanese wine made from rice. We make Japanese wine from rice. Another name for sake is the “best medicine of all the medicines” [laughs]. If you do not get intoxicated by it—if you do not take too much, that is the best medicine of all [laughs]. But when you are intoxicated, that is sake which you should not take or sell.

We say “sell.” This is very subtle. “Don't take” is not, adequate enough. “Don't sell” means—when you yourself are intoxicated by some gaining idea to make a profit from it, or when you are caught by something, you will try to sell it to others. “Buddhism is so wonderful a teaching! [Laughs.] Why don't you join us?” At that time you are already somehow intoxicated by it. So “don't sell” is very subtle expression. But it means also “do not take it.”

But, you can take it if you do not get caught by it. You can do it. But why we emphasize precepts observation is it will protect yourself from bad habits. Precepts will protect yourself, as our human nature has so many weak points. So, it is necessary for Buddha to protect us from evil habits by setting up some rules for us.

But, if we are wise enough, we should take care of ourselves with alertness. Not to fall into the pitfalls of human nature. We have many dangers in our life, and sometimes we know it, and sometimes we do not know it. So, it is necessary for us to have some rules to protect ourselves. And actually, precepts observation is a difficult way, but actually it is an easy way. The difficult way is to behave like a Buddhist without precepts, without any rules. This is very difficult. But if we have some precepts, it is easy for us to observe our way. What do you think [laughs]? Do you think this is just some good explanation of precepts? It is not so.

When I was young, I wanted to remain in celibacy. I didn't want to get married. Because I knew myself so much, I knew what would happen to me if I got married. I thought I'm not so—good. I knew pretty well. So I thought it may be easier to remain alone—to be a Buddhist. This is the easy way. But some people may think to get married, to remain Buddhist, may be easier because his wife will help him [laughs]. So it may be easier. Yes, in some ways it is easier, but it makes it more difficult to be a good priest.

So precepts observation is—we should be very grateful to the precepts. It is the mercy of the Buddha. If you think the precepts will be a bandage for your life, or precepts are the rules of your life, that is a big misunderstanding. It means you are not sincere enough. You don't know yourself, and you do not make enough effort to be a Buddhist. When you become Buddhist, you will find the true meaning of those precepts.

And so, Buddhism is not some knowledge or some philosophy—something to talk about.

Buddhism is for yourself. And, to study Buddhism is to help you yourself in its true sense. So, all the teaching is just within yourselves, not without. The spirit that started Buddhism is the spirit to solve everything as your own problem. That is how to study Buddhism, as Dogen Zenji says: "To study Buddhism is to study yourself." From beginning to end, it is the study of our life. No one helps you. If you expect someone's help, it means you lost your step, and you lost your true mind.

[Section 15, cont.] The buddhas have received and kept the Triple Refuge, the three collective pure precepts, and the ten grave prohibitions.

The buddhas have received and kept the Triple Refuge, and the three collective pure precepts, and then the ten grave prohibitions.

To receive transmission means to become a successor of a Buddhist. So succession of Buddhist life is to receive transmission. So, of course, to receive transmission is to receive the Triple Refuge, the three collective pure precepts, and the ten grave prohibitions.

[Section 16] By accepting the precepts, you will attain supreme enlightenment—the indestructible Buddhahood realized or to be realized by the buddhas of the past, present, and future. Would any wise man reject this goal? To all living beings, the buddhas have shown that when they accept the moral precepts, they attain Buddhahood—the rank equal to the Great Enlightenment—and that they are truly the children of the Buddha.

When you become a successor of Buddha's life, you are children of Buddha.

[Section 17] All the buddhas dwell here and embrace everything in their infinite wisdom. All the buddhas dwell here and embrace everything in their infinite wisdom.

All the buddhas is in your life, in its true sense—should be within your life. If so, within your life there should be precepts. And that is, at the same time, practice of zazen.

[Section 17, cont.] When all beings dwell here and embrace everything in their infinite views, see no distinction between subject and object—when this happens, all things—whether earth, vegetation, fence post, brick or pebbles—take the grace of the buddhas. The resulting wind and fire, fanned by the profound influence of the buddhas, drive us to intimate enlightenment. This is the merit of non-doing and non-striving—the awakening of the wisdom mind.

This is description of our life as a Buddhist.

[Repeats.] All the buddhas dwell here and embrace everything in their infinite views. When all things dwell here and embrace everything in their infinite views, see no distinction between subject and object—when this happens, all things—whether earth, vegetation, fence post, brick or pebbles, take grace of the Buddha. The resulting wind and fire, fanned by the profound influence of the Buddha, drive us to intimate enlightenment. This is the merit of non-doing and

non-striving—and the awakening of the wisdom mind—awakening of perfect wisdom which has no within or without. We call it limitless wisdom—activity of one mind. Here he said “intimate enlightenment.” This is something new. Always you say “great enlightenment” or “highest enlightenment,” but Dogen Zenji says “intimate enlightenment.” The most intimate one is enlightenment. The most intimate one to you is enlightenment. Do you understand? Enlightenment is something within you, or—you cannot say “within you.” If I say “within you,” it is not intimate enough to you. It is [laughs] hiding within yourself. If so, it is not intimate. Of course, if it is something beyond you, that is not intimate. If it is something to attain, it is not intimate. He says “intimate enlightenment.” This intimacy to enlightenment is our practice.

When you sit, just sit, with big mind. That is intimate enlightenment. It is so intimate that you do not realize [laughs, laughter] enlightenment. That is what he means. *Shitashii*—in Japanese, “friend, good friend.” We say “good friend.” A person who is intimate with you is *shitashii*—*shito*. It means, “intimate friend.”

And, we say also, *Shitashii naka nimo rei ni ya*. Even though a man and wife are intimate, there must be some rules between them. That is our way. You may say if it is an intimate relationship, there is no need to have some rules [laughs]. That is wrong understanding. Because the relationship between them is so intimate, it is necessary to set up some rules. So, our rules are based on an intimate relationship. Not to make some harmony between us, but to make our life more meaningful, we set up some rules. To observe rules is to be appreciative of the intimate relationship. That is rules. If there are no rules [laughs]— there is no enjoyment within our relationship. If we want to feel something, then we should have some rules, or at least we should be appreciative of the intimacy. Do you understand? This is precepts.

So, within our relationship between man and man, or man and woman, or man and nature, there are rules based on the intimate relationship. So, in observing rules, there is no trace of a rule. Even though there are rules, there is no need to be caught by it, because it is the expression of the intimate relationship. It is an expression of it. It is not something necessary to set up because of some unharmonious relationship.

So, in our practice, there is no trace of practice, and there is no shadow of the rules. No trace of the rules and no shadow of rules. To have a shadow of rules means, “I must do this.” That is a shadow [laughs]. Sometimes [laughs] you are scared of the shadow, of yourself [laughs]. That is a shadow. We should not have a shadow of the rules. Until you do it, that is not a rule. When you do it, that is a rule. When Buddha did something, that is a rule. There was no shadow for the Buddha, or there was no obligation for Buddha. So, we should not have a shadow of the rules or trace of the rules. If you do it, that's all. That is the real Buddha. We should not be caught by what we did, even if it is right. We shouldn't say, “What I did was right [laughs].” We should do it in the same way. That means you leave a trace of the teaching or a trace of the precepts.

So Dogen Zenji said, “Fish swim like a fish [laughs]. Birds fly like a bird [laughs].” That is Buddhist life. Fish swim, but there is no trace. Birds fly, but there is no trace of a bird. There is

no setup, or trace for birds.

In the original Japanese, “this bird” is beautiful sentence [laughs]. This translation is very good, and at the same time it is rather difficult to understand.

But in your practice, we repeat lecture after lecture, talking about some advantage of zazen practice [laughs]. So, naturally it means I am selling some [laughing] drugs or sake to you, and you are buying it, and you are taking it [laughter]. This is not so good. So, actually it is better to do it without listening to anything—just by the suggestion of the teacher. That is the best way. And, you should just stick to the teacher [laughs] with patience.

So, interpretation of pure mind is purity of the mind and patient mind. When you study Buddhism, patience—endurance is absolutely necessary, because we do not talk too much about the advantages of Buddhism. Until you find out [laughs], we will wait. If so, both for the teacher and student, the most important thing is endurance—to wait for the chance which will come between us. If you give up, you will have no chance to understand it in its true sense because Buddhism is not some knowledge or intellectual understanding. That is why we say, do not sell [laughs] Buddhism. Do not sell anything. Do not take anything. Cover your ears and eyes and mouth [laughs, laughter], and wait for the chance which will come to you [laughs]. Do you understand?

I cannot talk [said as he was covering his mouth with his hand] [laughs, laughter]. You cannot listen [laughs, laughter]. You cannot smell, even. That is how you study Buddhism. That is observation of the precepts. So whatever the religion is, the most important thing is a kind of austerity. This element is very important for every religion. I don't know other religions, but austerity is very important. “Let alone policy” is not good. When you limit your life to a certain extent, it is easier to find out the truth. If you do too many things [laughs], you will be lost in your activity. But if you limit your activity, you can see. That is why we observe precepts. The observation of precepts is very important.

Thank you very much.

---

<sup>1</sup> Suzuki is commenting on Shushogi, by Takia Takishu and Azegami Baisen (1890)— a summary of Dogen's Shobogenzo. Suzuki discussed Section 1 in SR-66-03-13-B.

<sup>2</sup> This second version appears to be Reiho Masunaga's translation, in either: (1) “Shushogi: True Meaning of Training and Enlightenment,” in *Zen for Daily Living*, Tokyo: Shunju-sha Publishing Co., Nov. 1964, p. 50; or (2) *ibid.*, in *The Soto Approach to Zen*, Layman Buddhist Society Press, Tokyo, 1958, p. 174. The source of the first quotation read by Suzuki is unknown. For the rest of the lecture, Suzuki follows Masunaga with only minor changes.

Source: City Center original tape. Verbatim transcript by Adam Tinkham and Bill Redican (5/8/01). Lightly edited for readability by Wendy Pirsig and Peter Ford (8/2020).