

Shobogenzo

Friday, August 19, 1966

Sesshin Lecture: Friday Morning, Lecture A

Sokoji, San Francisco

I think you must be tired [laughing]. But I know you are not tired out yet. Don't give up before you are actually tired. It is not so easy to be tired out. It is pretty difficult. Before you get tired out, it takes many and many years [laughter]. Don't worry.

You know the Sixth Patriarch—this Zen master¹ is the direct disciple of the Sixth Patriarch and was very famous, but unfortunately he did not have good disciples. But he became a teacher of the emperor. The emperor used to drive his cart when he was coming.² He was such a learned and virtuous person.

And, I stopped his answer halfway.³ So it may be better to start from the beginning of his answer to the question given by the monk who was born in a southern country.

The master said: “If it is so, their understanding is not different from the Senni-gedo's⁴ understanding.”

About Senni-gedo, we discussed it already. Their understanding is that the mind is something which is in their body, and which is permanent, and which is holy and divine. Although everything changes, that mind does not change, and that mind is universal mind to everyone. To realize this mind is to realize the truth. That is their understanding: something similar to Buddhism's, but not quite the same. In Buddhism, body and mind is one. But in this school—in this Indian religion—people believed in permanency of the mind and immortality of the mind while they believed in transiency of the material world. But their understanding of mind is also materialistic. And this is dualistic—dualism based on mechanics or materialism.

Buddha's understanding of mind and body we call the theory of interdependency. Our logic is more dialectical. Zen [?] studied [started?] logic. We do not discuss something neglecting our consciousness. So Buddhism is very much psychological. And someone may say Buddhism is the teaching of absolute contradiction or unity of opposites. We treat things as a unity of the opposite, as you see in the teachings of Kegon or Tendai. In Tendai, as you know, they discuss things in three ways: materialistic, primitive poor understanding of existence—beings, and a more advanced understanding is the understanding of nothing. The poor mechanical understanding is one or many, or one of many. Each existence is one of many, or each existence has its own character. This kind of understanding will end when it—with a more advanced understanding of being. Actually “one of many,” we say, but actually everything is changing. So “one of many,” we say, but that is whether one or many. “Many,” we say, but each one is changing. So, it means nothing exists [laughs].

So, the more advanced view of life is—*nothing* is a more advanced understanding. Here we have to understand things as nothing, and to understand things as some things which have various character. But there is a more advanced view of life, which is the understanding of nothing and nothingness, and the view of existence and non-existence which overcome or transcend both views, and which use or apply two ways of understanding. It is true that nothing exists. This is true. Something exists. This is true. And if you insist on each of them, that is wrong view. This is more advanced understanding. This is Buddhism, actually. So we may say mind exists, or mind does not exist. Both is true for us.

“If their understanding is like this, their understanding is not different from the understanding of Indian heretics called Senni.” The heretic says—This is refutation of the former description.—they say: “There is divine being in our body. This nature or being knows or feels everything. And when our body perishes this divine being will get out of our body. It is like people who live in a burning house. The house is not constant, but the owner of the house is always constant. They can get out of the house.”

In this way they discuss our way, but this is not right. It is difficult to know which is better. Always their understanding is almost the same, in Japanese we say *goji fogato*.⁵ It is the difference of escaping from the front 50 steps or 100 steps [laughs]. It is all the same, you know. “I did not run away as much as you did” [laughs, laughter]. It is nearly the same [laughs]. So it is difficult to know which is better.

Recently I see many people who are seeking in that way, and this tendency is very prevalent now. And they get three or five thousand people getting together, and if there is someone pretty famous they call him a great teacher. And the great teacher picks up the Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch, and they put their own rendering to the original text. And they insert some comment statements in the original scripture and ignore the holy meaning. And, they lead their students astray. It is a bitter thing that Buddhist teaching fell into such circumstances. True teaching is almost lost. If we think buddha-nature is something which is to be known by thinking, by hearing, by seeing it; why is it that Vimalakirti said, “True dharma is beyond our seeing or hearing or thinking?” If you practice—if you take the meaning of true dharma in terms of seeing or hearing or consciousness or thinking, this is the teaching of seeing or hearing or consciousness, and not true dharma.

Why did Vimalakirti say so? Vimalakirti is a famous lay Buddhist who lived in Buddha’s time. This is what he answered to the monk when the monk visited the teacher. And here Dogen says:

This National Teacher [Echu] was a head disciple of the Sixth Patriarch. He was the teacher of human beings and celestial beings. You should take him as a good example of studying Buddhism. Knowing that Senni’s teaching is heretical understanding, don’t follow this kind of understanding of the teaching.

In Sung Dynasty—in great Sung country— meaning China—there is no Zen master like that master. This National Teacher—after him there was no great teacher like him. But nowadays they think there are many great teachers, or more great teachers than him, like Rinzai⁶ or Tokusan.⁷ But we should take pity on this kind of people. We should regret their poor understanding of the teaching.

This is the next paragraph. I think you must have understanding. His direct disciple Echu refers to the Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch. At that time there were many copies, I think, and it seems they are not the same. There must be various copies.

[Aside.] Yeah. Excuse me. Did he come? Oh. Is he here? Where?

[Student.] Over there.

SR: The Sutra of Huineng—Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch—we use now is the book which was found in a cave. Still there is some doubt, strictly speaking. It was compiled by his disciple, not a direct disciple. So the direct disciple Echu criticized the Sutra of Huineng.

And the next paragraph—this is very difficult. So-called transmitted teaching from Buddha to us is the teaching of “mind itself is buddha.” Heretics or Hinayana Buddhists cannot see even in their dreams. This is a teaching which was transmitted directly from Buddha to us. And buddhas use “mind itself is buddha” as a vow [laughs]. I don’t know what to think. The buddhas and patriarchs, mind itself continuously—mind itself is buddha—buddha-mind [laughs]. “Mind itself is buddha”: those are four characters, but he used it as one word.

In Japan there is a waterfall not so big as Niagara, called Kegon. A Japanese philosopher committed suicide in the Kegon waterfall.⁸ Since then, we have used the name of the falls, Kegon, as a verb [laughs]. He [laughs]—he Kegons [laughs, laughter]. He committed suicide [laughter]. He does the same thing here [laughs, laughter]. All the buddhas [laughter]. Mind itself is buddha [laughs]. This is body [laughs].

The teaching, all the buddhas exhausted themselves [laughs] to it is [laughs] the teaching of mind itself is buddha [laughs]. For this teaching all the buddhas suffered a lot [laughter]. They exhausted themselves. They exhausted themselves by all the means by which they tried to understand it, but [laughs] they were not successful. But some day we will [laughs] be pretty successful, but not quite. Almost we will be successful, but it does not mean it is beyond our reach. It is so simple, and it is the ultimate truth, and truth near at hand, but it is so simple and so near at hand— actually within ourselves. So, it is pretty difficult to see it—as difficult as to see our own face. The only way is to see into a mirror. But Dogen Zenji says, it is not like seeing into a mirror. “Don’t think you can see into the mirror,” but sometimes he says you should see into the mirror [laughter]. Both is true. You know, this is our teaching.

And by hearing they understood it. By practice they understood it. By enlightenment they got it. How did they get it? They got it on the hundreds of kinds of weeds. This buddha is on hundreds

of weeds. All the buddhas picked up this truth, this teaching from the hundreds of the weeds. And, at the same time they forgot the teaching on the hundreds of the kinds of weeds. You should not pick up—if you pick up, that is not truth. You have to leave it [laughs].

Student: You have to what?

SR: Leave it. The truth is on the flower. You can see the truth on the flower—on various flowers, but you shouldn't pick it up. When it is on the flower it is true, but if you pick it up from the flower, flower is not flower anymore, truth is not truth anymore [laughs]. So all the buddhas understood it, but they forget it. You know, this is always how we study Buddhism. This is important. When you say that—when you nod like this—when you have completely understood it; you do not feel you understood it. You just [S.R. nods?] [laughs]. This is true understanding. If you work on it like you work on homework of [1-2 words] [laughs], that is not true understanding.

So they understood and forget it. This is our traditional truth—however:

It is not like a golden buddha of 15–16 feet high.⁹ It is a koan itself. There is no need to solve the koan. There is a koan which does not expect realization—which does not expect disintegration. This is realization of koan, he said. So disintegration is opposite of realization or revealing itself. So disintegration of a koan also means “mind itself is buddha.”

Those three worlds—past, present, future—it is not a matter of coming in or coming out. “Only mind,” you say, but it is not only mind. Mind is everything. “Mind is a fence or wall,” you say, but it is not this kind of mind. This mind is not something like water which is wanted when you make a wall with mud. It is not a matter of who creates or doesn't create. It means things is always created without creating. It is dynamic change itself. Dynamic change or dynamic creation without creation. Determination without determined . It takes various forms. This is Buddhist understanding of creation. So, here it says no one created.

Sometimes we study “mind itself is Buddha.” In Chinese it goes “itself mind is buddha.” So “itself mind is buddha,” we study “itself mind is buddha.” Sometimes we study “mind itself is buddha.” Sometimes we study “buddha itself is mind.” And, sometimes we study “is buddha [laughs] mind itself?” You know, change up the order—just change up the order.¹⁰

This way of study is how we study mind itself. With this teaching of mind itself buddha teaches mind itself is buddha [laughs]. Student is mind itself buddha. Teacher is mind itself buddha. And the teaching we give is mind itself buddha, he said.

This way of study is transmitted from Buddha to us. In this way, mind itself—this teaching was correctly transmitted from Buddha's time to our time. So-called transmitted mind is mind is everything. Everything is mind.

He repeats—he changes the order—subject and object. Sugar is sweet, but all that's sweet is

not sugar [laughs]. If you change the order of subject and object, it means complete identification. If it is exactly the same, you can change the order. So, there is no difference in one and many. This is his understanding, and this is true.

Therefore the ancient sage¹¹ said, “If you understand what is mind, the earth will become thicker—there is no soil on the earth or there not a piece of soil on the earth.”

If it is possible to say “this is mind,”—it is impossible. There is no special things which is called mind. But if that is possible, there is no earth because you picked up all the earth. So [laughs] there is no earth anymore. There is nothing. You picked up everything if you say “this is mind” [laughs]. You own everything. And if you say “this is mind,” in its true sense nothing will be left for anyone. Everyone will be included [laughs, laughter] as your property . So, we say there is no soil on the earth. If you recognize what is mind, heaven and earth will vanish, or it said heaven will fall down, and earth will burst out. Or we say, if you recognize the mind, the earth will become thicker by three inches [laughs].

That is extra, you know [laughs]. It is impossible to make the earth thicker by three inches [laughs]. So, it is impossible to recognize some special thing as mind. Mind itself is everything. So, if you say, I know what is mind, the earth will become thicker. Or if you pick up the earth, there is no earth, or there is no universe even.

The ancient sage¹² said, “What is the pure essence of mind? It is mountain, river, and earth. The sun, moon, and the stars.” Now we know clearly that the “mind” means mountain and river and earth, sun, moon, and the stars. But, if you are advanced in this understanding, your understanding is not enough. If your understanding is not enough, your understanding is enough [laughs, laughter].

Do you understand? [Laughter.] If you are advanced in this understanding, your understanding is not enough. If your understanding is not enough, your understanding is enough or too much [laughs, laughter]. Anyway, understanding is not enough or too much.

So if you understand it correctly, mountain is mountain [laughs], earth is earth. That’s all [laughs]. You should not put any extra fancy decoration [laughs]. Mountain is mountain. That’s all. This is how we transmitted our teaching, he says.

There is mountain, river, and earth which is only mountain, river, and earth. There is mountain, river, and earth which is just mountain, river, and earth. There is no waves, there is no wind or mist. There is just the sun, moon, and the stars. There is no limit in what exists in this world. There is no mist. The mind which goes and comes back in the realm of birth and death is just coming back and going. There is no delusion, there is no enlightenment. Mind of walls, fence, and bricks is fence, walls, and bricks. There is no soil and no water.

When you say, “This is wall,” wall is just wall. You should not say this consists of water and soil. When wall becomes wall, it is in the position of wall. Before it is in the position of dirt and

water. In just mechanical-materialistic understanding, you may say wall—dirt and water became a wall, but this is not the right understanding. In right understanding, wall is wall [laughs], and water is water, dirt is dirt. And dirt includes everything, water includes everything, wall includes everything. So they are the same.¹³

[The rest of this lecture is transferred from SR-66-08-18C, as it appears to be the continuation of the lecture.]

So there is no dirt and no water. When we say fence, wall, bricks, there is no soil or water. Mind is just four elements, five aggregates. There is no horse, and there is no monkey [laughs]. There is no chair. There is no whisk.

When we have a ceremony we use a whisk and chair [laughs]. When he refers to this—*shidai-gong*¹⁴—we say we consist of four elements—our body and mind consist of mind and four elements. So we have a ceremony on a chair with a whisk [laughs]. So he says, “The four elements and five aggregates is just four elements and five aggregates.” There is no horse for him to ride on, there is no mind like his mind, which is like a monkey [laughs]. Monkey mind [laughs]—our minds are very curious. So we always [laughs, laughter] seek something with curiosity [laughs, laughter]. So he says there is no monkey. And, there is no horse to [laughs] ride on. And no whisk and no chair for him.

Mind of whisk and chair is just this mind—whisk and chair. The mind is extra. Mind itself is buddha. It means everything itself, and mind is extra. When we say mind, mind includes everything. When we say whisk or chair, whisk or chair include everything. So there is nowhere—no place for mind [laughs]. No place for special mind. Mind of whisk and chair is just whisk and chair. There is no bamboo, and there is no wood. In this way, the teaching of mind itself buddha means non-duality.

This is a famous word—non-duality. Zen—no attachment. Attachment is not only positive, but also negative. There is negative attachment, and there is positive attachment. “I should not see such a thing”: that is negative attachment [laughs, laughter]. “I want to see something good” [laughs, laughter]: this is positive attachment. So this kind of attachment is polluted mind.

So, no duality—no polluted mind is mind itself buddha. All the buddha is buddha of non-polluted buddha. Therefore “mind itself is buddha” means to arise way-seeking mind, and to practice our way, and to have bodhisattva-mind, and to attain enlightenment.

It does not mean natural buddha. It looks very natural, but it is not so. If you want to see things as it is without any fancy idea, it is necessary for us to be capable of observing things as it is. If so, we have to have practice. We have to understand what is reality. We have to practice the Mahayana way, and we have to attain nirvana. This point is emphasized. This is the point.

There is no buddha who did not arise way-seeking mind, who did not practice our practice, who did not have bodhisattva-mind, who did not attain nirvana. Who did not do so, is not mind itself

is buddha. Even if he becomes mind itself is buddha in a smallest particle of time, he is the mind itself is buddha. In a speck of dust if he arises way-seeking mind and practices our way, he is the mind itself is buddha. Even if he practices a myriad of kalpas of time, he is also mind itself is Buddha. Even if he arises way-seeking mind and practices it in one memory—in one minute—he is mind itself is buddha. Even if he attains enlightenment in a half-fifth of space, in the space, he is the mind itself is Buddha.

If someone says—if it is necessary for him to practice our way for such a long time, that is not the teaching of the mind itself is buddha. Then he does not understand actually what it means by mind itself is buddha. He does not understand what it means. He did not learn thoroughly about mind itself is buddha. He does not have the right teacher.

And here we have the last of statement of the Shushogi [Shobogenzo “Sokushin Zebutsu”]:

So-called “buddha” is Shakyamuni Buddha himself. Shakyamuni Buddha is mind itself is Buddha. Buddhas in the past, present, and future. Buddhas past, present, and future. When he becomes Buddha, without exception he becomes Shakyamuni Buddha, and Shakyamuni Buddha is mind itself is Buddha.

He [Dogen] put the date here [at the end of the fascicle].

May 25th in the first year of O-En-o¹⁵.
Written in— [tape ends].

[Tape operator: The last words before he started again that were lost in this transition are]

—and showed to the disciples. It is hard to translate, it is pretty difficult. I hope you have understood.

There is a very interesting saying in Buddhism. I gave you this one already.¹⁶ [*Ikke-kaigoyo.*] “Each of the buds opens in five petals, and naturally result in one group.” “Each of the buds opens in five petals, and naturally results in one group.” Five—five is many. One is one. One and many is the same. This is a kind of fancy expression. “Each of the buds opens in five petals, and naturally results in one thing.” “Naturally results” means without any restriction. It opens by itself. When we see the buds open in five petals, we see freedom. But when we see fruit, we feel the restriction or destiny of the flowers which will reduce to one fruit. Here is some idea of causality. But it opens naturally, and it results in one fruit. There is no restriction.

Here is another. This one means, “The world of causality is world of creation.” “World of causality is world of creation.” There is no color of a pine—older or younger, but bamboo has node of upper and lower [laughs]. Do you understand? There is no color of—is my English good enough? There is no color of pine of older or younger. You know, pine trees have all the same color. This is what oneness is. But bamboo has nodes of upper or lower. Bamboo has upper nodes and lower nodes. This expresses also the relationship of one and many.

By reciting poems, we studied this kind of truth. It is maybe much better if you repeat this kind of saying in Japanese: *Masuni jo nyo koko no iranaku*.¹⁷ [Laughs.] *Takani jo ryo shira*. It is a kind of proverb. Without knowing what it means, people repeat it [laughs]. People at least know those sayings without knowing what they mean exactly. But if you dig into the meaning of it, it is very, very deep. It covers almost all the philosophy: the philosophy of unity, of duality or opposites, or absolute identity of the contradiction.

Thank you.

¹ Nanyang Huizhong (Nan'yō Echū): 675–775. Disciple of the Sixth Chinese Patriarch, Dajian Huineng (Daikan Enō). He taught three Tang emperors: Tang Xuan Zong, Tang Zu Zong, and Tang Dai Zong, the latter of whom gave him the title "National Master" or "National Teacher" (Jap. Kokushi).

² Upon Echū's arrival at the imperial palace, the emperor helped pull Echū's carriage along with his own hands.

³ Suzuki-rōshi is continuing his translation and commentary on Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō "Sokushin-zebutsu," picking up where he left off in SR-66-08-18-B, midway through the exchange between Echū and a monk.

⁴ Senni-gedō (Jap.): Senni (Senika) + gedō (non-Buddhist). An Indian non-Buddhist school led by Senika in Shākyamuni Buddha's time. It held that the body is perishable, but one's divine nature (atman) was imperishable. Senika questions Shākyamuni Buddha in the Avatamsaka-sūtra (Flower Garland Sūtra).

⁵ Spelled phonetically only.

⁶ Linji Yixuan (Rinzai Kigen): d. 867. Dharma successor of Huangbo Xiyun (Ōbaku Kiun); founder of Rinzai school of Zen.

⁷ Deshan Xuanjian (Tokusan Senkan): 782–865. Dharma successor of Longtan Chongxin (Ryūtan Sōshin).

⁸ Kegon Falls, in the Nikko region, is the highest waterfall in Japan. In 1893, Fujimura Misao, an eighteen-year-old student, committed "philosophical suicide" (tetsugakuteki jisatsu) by leaping from the top of Kegon Falls. In his suicide letter, he expressed his distress at attempts to use science to explain away the mysteries of the world. His death shocked the philosophically minded youth of late Meiji Japan (shortly before Suzuki-rōshi was born) and inflamed concerns about the apparent incompatibility of Western and Japanese modes of knowledge and tradition.

⁹ A 16-ft golden body is the idealized image of Buddha (Nishijima and Cross, Vol. 1, p. 52).

¹⁰ That is, Dōgen works through five permutations on the title of the fascicle: SOKU-SHIN-ZE-BUTSU; SHIN-SOKU-BUTSU-ZE; BUTSU-SOKU-ZE-SHIN; SOKU-SHIN-BUTSU-ZE; and ZE-BUTSU-SHIN-SOKU.

¹¹ Chang-ling Shou-tsuo (Chōrei Shutaku): otherwise unidentified.

¹² Guishan Lingyou (Isan Reiyū): 771–853. Dharma successor of Baizhang Huaihai (Hyakujō Ekai). The quotation is an exchange with his disciple Yangshan Huiji (Kyōzan Ejaku).

¹³ The rest of this lecture was transferred from SR-66-08-18C, as it appears to be the continuation of the lecture.

¹⁴ shidai (Jap.): the four elements (earth, water, fire, and wind)

¹⁵ 1239.

¹⁶ SR-66-08-18-B.

¹⁷ Both phrases are spelled phonetically only.

Source: Original City Center tape. Verbatim transcript by Adam Tinkham and Bill Redican (6/12/01). Lightly edited for readability by Wendy Pirsig and Peter Ford (8/2020).