

XIII.

July 6, 1970

7-6-70 513

Note: This lecture covers the following lines of the SANDOKAI:
 AYUMI O SUSUMU REBA KON NON NI ARAZU, MAYO TE SENGA NO KO HEDA
 TSU SHINDE, SANGEN NO HITO NI MOSU. KOIN MUNA SHIKU WATARU KOTO
 NAKARE.

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Here it says, "AYUMI O SUSUMU REBA KONO NON NI ARAZU..." (reading the four lines from the blackboard) AYUMI means "foot" or "step." SUSUMU REBA, "to carry on." KON NON NI ARAZU..." KON means "near." NON means "far away." AYUMI O SUSUMU REBA... AYUMI actually means "practice." KON NO NI ARAZU..."there's no idea of far away from the goal or nearer to the goal." This is very important. When you are involved in selfish practice you have some idea of attainment, and when you strive to attain Enlightenment, or to reach the goal you are far away from the goal, or you are almost there. KON NON..., "near" or "far away." But if you really practice our way Enlightenment is there. Hmmmmm.

Maybe this is rather difficult to accept. When you practice zazen without any idea of attainment there is actually Enlightenment. Or you may understand it in this way as Dogen Zenji explained: In our selfish practice there is Enlightenment and there is practice. Practice and Enlightenment are a pair of opposite ideas. But when we realize, when we understand our practice and Enlightenment as an event in the realm of the Great Dharma world, Enlightenment and practice are two events which appear in the Great Dharma world. Both practice and Enlightenment are also events which we will have with many events in our life, in our Dharma world. When we understand in that way Enlightenment is one of the events which symbolizes the Dharma world, and practice is also an event which symbolizes our Big Dharma world. So if both symbolize or express or suggest the Big Dharma world, actually there's no need for us to be discouraged because we do not attain Enlightenment, or why we should be extremely happy with our Enlightenment. Actually there is no difference. Both have equal value. So if Enlightenment is important, practice is

also important. We cannot evaluate which is good or bad. When we understand in this way, in each step we have Enlightenment. Even though we have Enlightenment there will not be any need to be excited with it, and step by step we will continue endless practice, appreciating the Dharma World, the bliss of the Dharma World. That is practice based on Enlightenment, practice beyond our experience of good and bad, practice which is beyond our selfish practice.

Last night Sekito said, "Whatever you see that is Tao." Unless you understand in that way, even though you practice, your practice will not work. And tonight, in this line he says, "If you practice our way in its true sense there's no problem of whether we are almost there or whether we are far away from the point. Beginner's practice and great Zen Master's practice are not different. But if you are involved in selfish practice then that is delusion. MAYO TE SENGA NO KO HEDA TSU... If you practice deluded practice, if you practice our way in dualistic sense (practice and Enlightenment) then there are various difficulties of crossing rivers or mountains. SENGA NO KO... SEN is "mountain." GA is "river." KO is "difficulties." You will be separated from the Ta o by the difficulties of crossing mountains and rivers. MAYO TE SENGA NO KO HEDA TSU...

And the next line is: TSU SHINDE SANGEN NO HITO NI MOSU. TSU SHINDE is "most respectfully" or "reverently" "...I tell all the seekers of the way." SANGEN NO HITO means "seekers of the truth." SAN is like SANZEN, like SANPAI. SANZEN means "to visit a Zen Master." GEN is "profound teaching." HITO means "men." So it means to visit a profound teacher, or to study a profound teaching or those who study profound teaching. "I say to the people who want to visit the real teachers..." GEN is "profound" "profound teaching."

KCIN MUN SHIKU SATARU KOTO NAKARE. KCIN means "sunbeam" or "day and night." KO is "sunbeam" and IN means "shadow." And KCIN (this is one word) means "day and night" or "time." MUNA SHIKU WATARU means "to spend" or "to cross" or "to pass." NAKARE means "not." MUNA SHIKU is "in vain." WATARU is "to pass." "Don't pass the day and night without doing anything, or in vain." To pass the day and night in vain does not mean only to "goof-off" without doing anything. That is maybe the one way of passing the

day and night without doing anything, but what he means here is more profound. Even though you work very hard sometimes you may be passing your valuable time without doing anything. If you don't know what you are doing we may say, "Oh you are passing your time in vain." You may say, "No, I'm striving very hard to make my savings account \$10,000.00" But to us it is just spending your time in vain. It doesn't make much sense. Even though you work hard in Tassajara in your work period it does not always mean you are spending your time properly, that you are doing something properly. Hmmm. What does it mean then? If you "goof-off" you are wasting your time. Even though you work hard, maybe you are also spending your time in vain. This is maybe a kind of koan for you.

Do you know what it means? "Every day is a good day." This is a famous koan. "Everyday is a good day." It does not mean not to make some complaints even though you have some difficulty. It does not mean that even though it is hot you shouldn't complain, or even though it is cold you shouldn't complain, or whatever happens you shouldn't complain. It does not mean something like that. "Everyday is a good day." What it means is "Don't spend your time in vain." I think most people are spending their time in vain. "No, I am always busy," he may say, but if he says so it is a sure sign of his spending his time in vain. Most people do things as if they knew what they are doing, with some purpose. But even so I don't think they are doing things with the proper understanding of their activity. I think still they may be doing things in vain. When you do something with the usual purpose which is based on some evaluation of what is useful or useless, or good or bad, or valuable or less valuable, that is not perfect understanding. If you do things whether they are good or bad, or successful or unsuccessful (which is out of the question), if you do things because you should do them, then that is real practice. If you do things not because of Buddha or because of yourself or because of the Truth, or for yourself or for others, if you do things for the things, then that is the true way.

I cannot explain it so well. Maybe I shouldn't explain so much. You shouldn't do things just because you feel good, or you shouldn't stop doing things just because you don't feel so

good. Whether you feel good or bad there's something which you should do. If you don't have this kind of feeling, if you don't understand this kind of feeling, of doing things whether it is right or wrong, or good or bad, if you don't understand this kind of feeling, you have not yet started on our way in its true sense.

I don't know why I am at Tassajara. It is not for you, or for myself, or not even for Buddha or for Buddhism. I'm just here. (laughing) I don't feel so good when I think I have to leave Tassajara in two or three weeks. I don't know why. (laughing) I don't think that it is just because you are my students. I don't think so. I do not have any particular person whom I love so much. I don't know why I have to be here. I have not much attachment to Tassajara. It is not because I am attached to Tassajara. HMMMMM. Anyway, I'm not expecting anything in the future in the term of ministry or Buddhism. But I don't want to live in the air. I want to be right here. I want to stand on my feet. The only way to stand on my feet is when I am at Tassajara I sit at Tassajara. (laughing) That is the reason I am here. I want to be here. That is the most important thing for me, to stand on my feet, and to sit on my black cushion. I don't trust anything but my feet or my black cushion. They are my friends always. My feet are always my friends. When I am in bed my bed is my friend. There's no Buddha or no Buddhism, or no Zen. If you ask me, "What is Zen?" my answer will be, "To sit on black cushion is Zen" or "To walk with my feet is my Zen." To stay at this moment on this place is my Zen. There's no other Zen. When I'm really standing on my feet I am not lost. So for me, that is Nirvana. So there's no need for me to travel, to cross mountains or rivers. I'm right here on the Dharma World. So I have no difficulty crossing mountains and rivers. That is how we do not waste our time. Moment after moment we should live on this moment, right here, without sacrificing this moment for the future.

At Sekito's time Zen Buddhism was very polemical. The background of the teaching was always some discussion or a kind of fight. Especially in Chinese Buddhism you can see this kind of conflict in their teaching. And in talking about the various ways

of practice, and the various ways of understanding Zen they were lost in dispute. There were many schools of Zen, but because they were involved in some kind of "right teaching" or "wrong teaching" or "traditional teaching" or some "heretical Teaching" (heresy) they lost their main point of practice, so that is why Sekito said, "Don't spend your time in vain," sacrificing your actual practice for some idealistic practice, trying to attain some perfection, or trying to understand what is the traditional understanding taught by the Sixth Patriarch. They compiled the Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch in their own way and said, "This is the Sixth Patriarch's Way. Those who do not have this book are not the descendents of the Sixth Patriarch." This kind of understanding of Zen prevailed at that time. That is why Sekito said, "I reverently say to the seekers of the profound way, "Don't spend your time in vain." What it means is very profound. "Don't spend your time in vain." What it means is very profound. Without being caught by some idea, some selfish understanding of practice or teaching, to follow the right practice is our way.

This kind of practice is called "Polishing-Tile-Practice." "To-Polish-Tile-Practice." Usually people will polish a mirror because if you polish it, it will be a clear, good mirror. Why you polish it is to have a clear surface of the mirror. The reason why we polish mirror is to have a mirror-like complete shining surface, so if someone starts to polish a tile you may laugh at him. To make a good tile is to polish a tile, and to polish a mirror is to have an actual mirror is the reason why we polish a mirror. Someone may say, "Oh, this is just a tile. It cannot be a mirror." That is the practice of those who easily give up their practice because they think, "I cannot be a good zen student so I have to give up without polishing (without sitting zazen), without realizing that tile is valuable, sometimes more valuable than a mirror, because a mirror is too expensive for roofing. No one can afford to make a roof with mirrors. Tile is very good to make our roof. So tile is also important. As mirrors are important to look at yourself in it. That is "Tile-Polishing-Practice." MASEN we say.

As you know there is a famous story about Baso, the grandson of the Sixth Patriarch and Nangaku, a disciple of the Sixth Patriarch. Baso was practicing zazen. Nangaku, the teacher, who

passed by, asked him, "What are you doing?"

"I'm practicing zazen to be a Buddha."

"Ah, that's very nice of you" (laughing) "trying to be a Buddha," and Nangaku picked up a tile and started to polish it. So Baso asked him (with some curiosity) "what are you doing?" Nangaku said, "I want to make this tile into a mirror." And his disciple asked him whether it was possible to make a tile into a mirror. Nangaku said, "Well, you said you are practicing zazen to be a Buddha, but Buddha is not always someone who attained Enlightenment. Everyone is Buddha, whether they attained Enlightenment or not they are Buddha. Baso's answer was, "I want to be a Buddha by sitting practice." And so the teacher said, "You said 'Practice in squatting position, sitting position,' but to sit in sitting position is not Zen always. Whatever you do that will be zazen." So Baso was lost.

"Then what will be the appropriate practice?" So Nangaku, without explaining to Baso asked, "If a cart does not go which will be the appropriate way to make it go, to hit the cart or to hit the horse? Which will be the appropriate way? But Baso couldn't answer because the disciple Baso was still involved in practice to attain something. So Nangaku continued the explanation of the practice. In short, (I cannot translate it literally) but what he said was, "If you think, which is the right way, to whip the cart or to whip the horse, this is wrong, because the cart and the horse actually are not separated, they are one. To whip a horse means to whip a cart. And if you whip the cart, naturally the horse will go because they are one. Practice and Enlightenment are one like cart and horse are one. So if you practice, actual physical practice, that is also Enlightenment. We call practice based on Enlightenment "real practice which has no end." We call Enlightenment which started with practice, which is one with practice "beginningless Enlightenment." Because if someone starts to practice, there is Enlightenment. Where there is practice there is Enlightenment. Where there is Enlightenment there is also practice. There is no Enlightenment without practice. If you don't stay on this spot realizing your position then you are not practicing our way. So if you are wasting your time, or if you are trying to sacrifice your present practice for future attainment

that is not real practice.

Sekito actually was the direct disciple of the Sixth Patriarch. He knew the Sixth Patriarch's way (practice) very well. So when Katakū-jine and his disciples started to denounce the Northern School of Jinshu, he felt very bad about them, attaching to some idea and denouncing superficially what is real practice, Hoku Zen, Zinshu's practice. This understanding is extended, succeeded by Dogen in Japan, and Dogen extended his idea more widely and not just logically, but in a more emotional way, with more feeling, and in a more poetic way through his tenacious thinking mind. So some people may say, "The SANDOKAI is not so good because it is so philosophical. It may be so if you don't understand the background of Sekito's teaching, and if your mind does not penetrate through his words. We say, "To read the back of the paper" not the printed character but the other side of the book. You may feel in that way. But his is actually a very important work, the SANDOKAI.

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