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SUZUKI ROSHI LECTURE

Tuesday, June 17, 1969

...is just to practice zazen, you know. It will not be perfect enough. (To only do zazen practice). So more and more I want to make a rule, strict and maybe formal and rigid. Or else you will waste your time, I think. How should we establish our system of practice is...will be our future subject.

I started to explain the way upward and way downward...or to help others and to help yourself. To climb up the top of the pole and to come down from the top of the pole. This is rather fancy, more advanced practice. So it may be...it may not be necessary for you actually to have me explain this point, but it may be important for us to understand, to know what kind of practice you will have after you enter our practice hall. And only when you actually started our true practice in our zendo, that practice will be extended in your everyday life. And this evening I want to explain this point more: how to develop our everyday zazen...our zazen practice in our everyday life. Because to follow rigid practice does not mean Zen is always to follow rigid rituals or rigid practice.

It is necessary for you to get through that door, but that is just door. So to make...I want to explain what kind of practice you will have after you enter the door, or else no one will come to Zen Center if you say "Just to follow the rigid practice is Zen. And Zen Center practice is just to sit, come and sit at certain time and to follow teacher's instruction, which is very formal." Then, no one will come to Zen Center, I am afraid. So I want to explain little bit, you know, about this point, as much as possible.

It is rather difficult to explain what is not possible to explain, but as much as I can I want to explain...refer you to several koan, at least one or two koan.

"Climbing up the top of the pole...to make one step forward from it"...is very famous koan, and many teachers explaining about it. And for Soto priests...for Soto students, the most we have a story, you know. *Four Kinds of Horse*. Do you the story of *Four Kinds of Horse*?

The horse which will run at the shade of the whip, before he get the whip. And the next one is: as soon as the whip reach to his hair he will start to run. That is the second one. And third one is: when he felt pain on his skin, he will run. That is the third one. The fourth one is...fourth one will not run until the pain penetrates into the marrow of the bone...then he will start to run. The whip, by which we mean the teaching of evanescence of life...teaching of evanescence of life. Or teaching that everything changes; there is nothing to stick to; there is nothing to care for, in its true sense, because everything is changing. That is the Buddha's most important teaching.

Many Buddhists, since ancient times, they studied various scriptures. And practiced hard. But Dogen Zenji says, you know, there is not something to study, he says. It is actual fact which you see everyday. No one can stay always young. Nothing is always the same. Everything is changing, including you. That is actual fact you see. That is not something which you will study after reading many books. So if you really suffer; if you have a lot of suffering in your everyday life, you will actually feel the most important teaching of Buddhism, that "everything changes, there is nothing to stick to." But nowadays, you know, our system of the world, of society, is based on to develop our desires, to stick to something and to gain something. And we study many things just to develop our greedy desires. And our knowledge cannot stay as scientific study. So scientific research is always result of some improvement. By doing something, by making some mistake. As soon as we know it is possible to reach the Moon, you know, we actually try to do it.

So our study is not just intellectual study or scientific study, it is directly connected with our desires. And every system of our society is based on this kind of desire, without knowing what is human nature in its true sense, but to desire to see something and to gain something...not only some subject to study, but also some concrete way of achieving. This is what we are doing actually, and we are, everyone of us is deeply, completely involved in this kind of activity, social activity. But we never try to understand what is ourselves. What Is our True nature. And even Zen students who want to study ourselves through and through are included...are involved in this kind of idea of study, way of study.

By practicing zazen, you know, you want to attain enlightenment. But that enlightenment must be very concrete. Something...if you can "fly," you know. If you cannot fly you don't think you attained enlightenment. Or if you feel very good you don't think you attained enlightenment. So the effort to attain enlightenment is another way of developing your desires. "To go to Japan." Or "To know what kind of thing he is thinking." Or, "Without asking someone any question, to know what kind of mind he has." That is a kind of power of enlightenment. And many people seek for that kind of enlightenment.

So, maybe, none of us...none of us are really practicing true zazen. Before we stop trying to find out something from outside, we cannot start our true practice. You may ask me how to practice. But it is rather difficult to say in its positive way, in positive way. But negative way, I can give you various suggestions.

And then, I think Zen Center is not just for priest. And it is for laymen, too. Most of you will be students who want to study our way as a layman, I think. So it may be rather difficult to follow our way as a layman. But even for one year or more. Not you know, forever. I think it is necessary to follow our practice as long as you come to Zen Center. And our way, although our way is not just for priest, to know, to realize what is our practice, it is necessary for you to follow our way as much as possible.

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And how you apply our practice...our practice in your everyday life, is, in short: in your everyday life, the most important thing is to be completely involved in what you are doing. And to do something just to do something as a means of gaining something is...you should do things for sake of...as a practice, as you practice zazen.

In your zazen, just to practice zazen is purpose of practice. You practice zazen for the sake of zazen. And we say: We practice zazen not for others, not for ourselves. We practice zazen just for sake of practice. That is true practice.

And that practice could be the practice to save others. To save yourself and to help yourself, and to help others. And to develop Buddha's way. But when you do you should have no idea of doing something. You should be completely involved in your practice and you must be able to do it. That is, in short, how to extend our practice in your everyday life.

To attain enlightenment...even though you attain enlightenment, in life you must attain enlightenment enumerable times. And you have to have big enlightenment two or three times, is what they say. And in Soto, we should continue our practice forever. How we continue our practice is to be involved in what you are doing right now. If you are counting, you should Count. And if you are doing something with your mind, your mind should be always with what you are doing. Just as, when you sit, you just sit without thinking anything. But in your activity, you act or you think, so you should be completely involved in your thinking mind.

For...for...for maybe ten days or more, I was completely involved in thinking, you know. In one thinking. I was concentrating how to...what to...what kind of...which way to take the Zen Center group, you know. This way or that way. I was completely involved in this idea. So I didn't know that I was completely involved in that thinking, but my wife told me many things. "You say, when you do something you should be completely involved in it, but look what you did! What are you doing! What do you do when you go to the restroom!?" But I didn't say anything. I cannot say anything, because I feel I have to go to the restroom, that is why I go to the restroom, but actually I didn't have any idea of going to restroom, or where I was: restroom or dining room were same to me. But I was completely involved in one thing only.

So it is rather difficult to say how you should be...how you should extend your practice in your everyday activity. But actually, in short, your life should be always...you shouldn't be idle, you know. And, when, to be idle...to think about something, you know, or try to think, "I must read this book" means you are still hesitating to study. "I must go

to Sokoji and practice zazen"...that...it means that you are still involved in some lazy mind. When you are completely involved in it, without knowing you, your foot, your body will be carried to the zazen practice hall. So you will not have any regret afterwards, what you have done, if you completely involved in it.

Why it is difficult for us to continue this kind of practice is because of our self-centered desires. We should always know this point, and we should always try to give up this kind of self-centered desire after you, even after you attain enlightenment. If you notice this point, whether you are Rinzai student or Soto student, you will start real practice, which Dogen points out. The practice which is one with enlightenment. And in this practice there is no difference between Rinzai and Soto. Before you enter, the approach is different. Just before you enter the meditation hall there are Rinzai students and Soto students. After you enter our hall there is no difference at all.

There are various kinds of words to explain this idea of oneness of practice and enlightenment. Soto students always say "oneness of practice and enlightenment." But this is One of the many ways of explaining our true practice. "To jump off the top of the pole" is the same idea. Or "to kill Buddha." This is rather an extraordinary word, "to kill Buddha." "Killing Buddha practice." It means that after you enter the Buddha Hall you should be completely involved in your pure practice. You have no idea of what is Buddhahood, or whether you are ordinary person or Buddha. So we say "kill the Buddha!" After you attain enlightenment you shouldn't have any idea of enlightenment. So you have to kill the idea of enlightenment...that is to "kill the Buddha." So when you have no idea of enlightenment, there is no difference between Buddhist or non-Buddhist. When you have no idea of Buddha. The difference between Buddhist and non-Buddhist is Buddhist has...true Buddhist has no idea of Buddha or laymen, but ordinary people have, stick to the idea of Buddha and laymen, or ordinary people. That is the difference. So they may start to...they may start to come to zazen. But after he enters the Buddha Hall, he shouldn't have any idea of attainment in his practice. Even though, you know, he enter the Buddha Hall, as long as he...his practice is involved in attaining enlightenment before he attained enlightenment, then he is not spiritually a true Buddhist. That is the difference. But both, some ordinary people have no idea of Buddhahood...what is Buddhahood or what is ordinary people. As Buddhist who knows our true practice has no idea of Buddha who is helping others. And no idea of people who wants Buddha's help. But Buddhists will continuously try to help other people forever. That is, you know, way. That is his own practice to help himself. That is also the way to help others. So there is no two ways. When you are able to extend our practice in your everyday life to help others and to continue our practice for your sake: same thing. Not different at all.

So way upward and way downward are the same. So actually, as I said, there is no point...no top of the pole. What we should do is continuously keep on...keep going on and on. That is our way, when we realize this point. So some people may say "to jump off from the top of the pole" means to attain enlightenment; and "forget the top of the pole" means to jump off from the top of the pole. Some people may understand in that way. But actually, when you jump off from the top of the pole, you start real practice.

Before you climb up to the top of the pole, that was not true practice. So "climb up to the top of the pole" means, for Soto student, to enter zendo after you see all the notice on the bulletin board. "Okay!" You may say, "Oh my!" anyway, I will do it." That is to enter...to climb up to the top of the pole. Not step by step...all of a sudden! (He makes a loud roar). Jump off from the top of the pole.

It may take many pretty long time, before you make that kind of decision, you know. Before you feel commitment as a student. It may take time, but anyway, when you do it, they way you do it...that is the way.

If you ask him: "Why is Soto way so rigid?"...even though you ask your teacher, he won't say anything. "Just do it!" That is what he will say. That is to jump off from the top of the pole.

Dick wrote me and said: "Soto way looks like gradual way, but I don't think so," he said. "Soto way is more subtle way. Our way is when someone push something from the cliff." I think that is more Soto way. Rinzai student can practice zazen, you know, until he find out big box, you know. Wandering about mountains and stream, and appreciating beautiful sights, and he may encounter by some chance, a big ox. But Soto way is to show a student a big hip of the ox. (Making loud ox noise). "This is the ox! You should see it! Did you see it?" It is so big that even though you hit it, he will not move.

That is more Soto way. Do you understand? That is what Dogen said. It is not matter of something you acquire after reading many scripture or after listening to fancy explanation of great Zen master. "It is actually what you are confronting right now, here!" That is what Dogen Zenji says. You should see the big ox in front of you, without any explanation; without practicing zazen. It is true, you know.

Just don't want to see it, you know. It is so big and so Ugly! "Nooo. No.!! That is not Buddhism. Oh, no!" So may be better to take a walk you know, to take a trip. Trip of study. And, "I may come back same place, but not now!" I feel in that way.

So if you don't want to waste your time, I think you should establish some rules for American Zen student. It is very big problem for me and for you, and I was thinking about it for many and many days, until I forget where I was. Restroom or dining room...I didn't know. I think I want you to join our problem: how we establish our way of studying Zen in America. It is not matter of Rinzai or Soto.

Do you have some questions?

Question: Roshi, what is the difference between concentrating on something and allowing yourself to actually do it? During the day I continuously work at whether I should concentrate when I do it, like, "Okay, now I am going to do this" or whether I should just do it and allow it to be done.

Roshi: Maybe in your everyday activity it is necessary to be concentrated. Try to be concentrated on something especially. In your zazen, I think, especially for you, better to allow yourself to do. You are very good in concentration on one thing. So if you practice that way in your zazen, your mind will be like this, you know. Your mind will be very sharp, in very sharp concentration. And your mind will not open. But when we are in some situation where it is difficult to be concentrated on one thing., because of the noise or disturbance, it is necessary to be concentrated on one thing.

Question: Sometimes in confusion and turmoil, I recite the mantra, *Om mani padme hum*, in order to calm my mind and find a center. Would you consider that concentration also, as an aid to concentration?

Roshi: Yes, but more...best way is to explain in your practice in zendo, you know. You are trying to be concentrated on one thing. Still you are trying, you know. So that is not...that is not best way. You should be more natural in your doing things.

Question: What is the difference between the disciplined practice and the _____practice?

Roshi: Oh, same, maybe. The difference is whether you do it deep, strong conviction or you do it with small ego mind, small egocentric mind. That is attachment, literally. That is attachment. But if you do it with big mind, it may be attachment...it may be strong attachment but it has no...it will not...that attachment will not leave any trace in your practice. So, it is also detachment, you know. Because you have no trace of doing something. So when you are doing , that is strong attachment. You are doing. But after you did it, the difference is you have no trace of activity. When you do it with big mind, with strong conviction, you have no...you don't have to think about it because you did it with big mind. You don't...you are not regretful. So it is detachment. And when you are doing it is very strong attachment.

Question: When you do it with the bog mind, then you don't question whether it is disciplined or not?

Roshi: No. The word "disciplined" I don't think is appropriate word for our practice. Practice is more something which should be done with big mind, not by small ego mind.

Question: Roshi, when we sit in zazen and we feel pain in our legs, should we concentrate on the pain or away from the pain?

Roshi: You know that is quite natural, and you know, that is a kind of everyday routine. That is not problem. Do you understand? It is same thing you feel hungry, you know. It is no difference.

Question: But when you are hungry you eat, usually.

Roshi: You eat. But what will happen to you if you eat whenever you are hungry. Maybe

it is necessary to feel hungry for one hour or so.

Question: I want to know if you think we should concentrate on the pain or just ignore it.

Roshi: Maybe...that is not big problem. In comparison to the problem Buddha points out. Maybe that is big, big problem. So many people, Zen students and ZEN masters say: We must achieve Buddha hood next life. If it is not possible to do it next life, we will achieve it someday, after many lives. The problem is so big. But pain on our legs is small problem. Noting wrong to have pain in your legs. And crossing if it is too painful, there is no need to cross your legs.

Student: What I was interested in was should I concentrate on the pain or away from it?

Roshi: Oh, away from it? No. Don't try to be away from it. And don't try to be concentrated on it. Let it painful. Let it be painful always. That is your problem, we may say. You have to practice zazen. If you are painful, that is your problem.

Question: Roshi, when counting your breath, is it better to let your breath take its natural rhythm and observe it, or to sort of "make" the number s by pushing your breath?

Roshi: I think why I suggested to practice counting breathing practice is, in its...to practice following breathing is more advanced practice. And it is difficult to practice it in its true sense. So you should do it after you are able to practice counting breathing practice. Then your practice will be more complete.

End

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