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SUZUKI ROSHI LECTURE

June 31, 1969, Tassajara.

It is rather difficult for us to figure out why we started to practice zazen. It is rather difficult, and I think it may be said for you. But the more you think why you started zazen practice, the more you will find out how deep it is...the meaning (why) you started zazen practice. And once you start our practice, even though your determination is not so strong, or you don't feel your determination is (not) so strong, but you will find out how strong the determination has been. It is rather difficult, you know.

You think, or when you are here you think, sometimes or once in a while: "It maybe better to give up." But actually to give up our study or practice, is not so easy. But you have some, you know...when your, your determination...you think your determination is not so strong...when you think in that way, your...you will not make much, much progress. So anyway, once you study, start to study zazen, it is better for you to have strong determination not to give up our study or our practice. That is why we Soto students put emphasis on Way Seeking Mind or determination to practice our way forever. And trust in our true nature, who...which is always seeking for our True Nature. You know, we say true nature is seeking for True Nature. You know, true...because we have true nature, so naturally we seek for, it is quite natural for us to seek for True Nature. So Buddha seek for Buddha, we say.

So anyway, you know, once you study, start to practice zazen, even though you stop it or you leave Tassajara or Zen center, I am sure you will come back. I am quite sure about that. But it is rather waste of time. So once you stay, anyway you are caught by Buddha Nature which you have, you know. So, to get through our practice until you have freedom from it. Then, whenever you do, that is extended practice of zazen. If you, if you stop practicing it until you have freedom from even zazen practice, your life will be always shaking, you know. So you feel as if you waste your whole life.

For a man who realized what is practice, even though we haven't attained enlightenment...so called "enlightenment," we don't feel we waste, we have been...our practice have been waste of time. We don't feel in that way. If you, you are, even though your practice is not perfect, you think: Someday, or in next life you will, you know, sure to...you will have, sure to have that kind of feeling. And we are quite, we know what we...what kind of life we should have. So even though you don't feel your life way perfect, you will leave for your descendent some problem which they should solve. So your descendent or some of you will find out the meaning of our practice, and find out it is necessary for human being to solve this problem and to continue our practice. So if no one start this kind of practice, your descendants will not find out what is our true life, and what is the way to solve personal problems as well as social problems.

Especially, I think in America not much peoples knows the meaning of practice. And even in Japan, too, you know, it is...in Japan, I think, there are, they have wrong

understanding of layman and priest. Priest is...priests are quite different Buddhists from laymen. But that is not right. So, although priests practice zazen, laymen don't. Laymen don't practice zazen. Their understanding...they think zazen practice is too difficult for laymen, so the priest only should practice zazen. But that is...they have this kind of idea. So I think most of Japanese people doesn't understand why we practice zazen. It is not matter of laymen and priest. For all of us it is necessary to practice zazen. Not only Buddhist but also for all followers of various religions. But zazen practice is not just personal practice. Buddhist practice is for each one of ourselves, and for the other, too. And to help themselves and to help others is the purpose of our practice, and reason why we practice zazen.

I think it is, now it is the time to practice zazen for...with everyone one of us. So if you realize this point, our practice is not just for ourselves. And we should know this point. I know the American people are very individualistic, you know, so their practice is very sincere. I know that, but their practice is just, tend to be just for himself. So if he thinks, you know, he has...he thinks he has freedom of choice whether you should practice...whether he should do it or not...but we, actually we don't practice our zazen just for ourselves. And here I feel some difficulty, some, you know...in spreading our true way in America. Maybe, you know, personally I think you may have very good teacher. But, and good teacher will give up persona things, and sacrificing their...his own life, and he may devote himself to the practice, in its true sense.

But people may think, you know, that is just his choice, it doesn't you know...just his choice. So: "for him that may be very good thing, but I don't...I don't agree with him...or, his practice has nothing to do with, with mine, without life." So even though you have, will have good teacher, I think you will appreciate his value, or his practice, his being...you may Not appreciate him so much. But that is, you know, that kind of understanding of individualism is not so good. Individualism, in its true sense, is very good, and our religion should be for each one of us, first of all. He should do it for his own sake. He should not concerned about other's criticism. He should have strong determination to do it. In this point individualism is very good, but if you think individualism is absolute teaching, like Bible or Scripture, you know, we don't take that kind of understanding.

For Buddhist there is no absolute teaching. Even though it is good, we should know good side and bad side. We should know our tendencies. We should know that it is human beings who believe in some kind of teaching, and human beings originally have some difficulty to accept teaching as it is. Usually we accept teaching just to make some excuse for himself, for ourselves. You know. In Scripture it says "so and so." "So it is good to do so." Without thinking about it so much. "Scripture said this is American way, that is the Japanese way." You know, we don't accept teaching in that way. When you want to study...accept teaching...you should know what it is. American way is not always good. Japanese way is not always good. If there is good side there must be bad side. So we should be very careful to accept teaching. We should know the both sides of the one teaching.

You may say this is difference of the cultural background, so Buddhist...Buddhism should be extended, or should be developed according to the cultural background. And "In America there must be American Buddhism, as Japanese Buddhism, is...based on or extended on the base of the Japanese culture." But this is, you know,,one of the important characteristic of Buddhism is: whatever the cultural background is, Buddhism has some power to penetrate into the cultural background. We do not ignore the cultural background, but Buddhism is the deeper foundation of various cultural background. That is why, even though Chinese...Indian Buddhism, Chinese Buddhism, and Japanese Buddhism are different, quite different, are very different I may say, but there is some traditional understanding of Buddhism which is always the same.

So I think until you understand your culture, good side and bad side, and accept the Bud...accept Buddhism as a deeper foundation of your culture, I think you, your effort will...you will make vain effort. So we should know that all of us are just human beings. You know I am Japanese and you are American. But I think, even though you say you are American, you know, I don't know who is true American and who is not.

Dick...the other day Dick wrote me saying: "I thought, you know, you are, you are not...I didn't know you are not so Japanese." But when I came to America I thought many people like me, in Japan. The more he understand Japanese people, the more he understand how difficult Japanese way. I am, you know, among you, even though I...if I don't wear this robe, I don't know. You may...you don't think I am Japanese. But if you go to Japan, seeing people like me, you will, you immediately realize: "Oh, he is Japanese." Maybe, especially you saw me from back. You know. "Oh, same figure." Same figure as you see in Japan...you see many people like me, you will have idea of Japanese. But if I talk personally with you, there is no idea of Japanese or American. And if we are just here, even though I am Japanese, when I am talking with you like this, I have no idea of Japanese. And I don't think you have any idea of Japanese.

So Japanese or American is just idea. American way or Japanese way, you say, but actually there is no such thing. There may be same, you know, people doing same thing, but it does not mean he is Japanese. People may say, people may have some idea of Japanese, that's all. As Dogen Zenji says: "No one say, you know, he is, he is Zen Buddhist or Soto Zen student. No one call himself Soto Zen student...teacher. But people may say he is Soto. But, that, that does not mean we should call ourselves Soto students. So we, when you make some excuse, you say: "This is...we are American people who is raised in American cultural background." I don't think that is proper, that is right. Actually, for each individual there is no American way or Japanese way. That is his own way. So he should, he is responsible for his own way of life and understanding.

And, and I think we should not try to propagate Zen in America. That is not Doge Zenji's way. One by one is enough. If we have, you know, good understanding between your friends, that is enough. If you love someone, you know, you should try to make...make him understand you. That's all. That is quite natural for us. But we should not try to propagate Soto Zen or Rinzai Zen in America. It is same thing, you know, try to force Japanese way, way of life, to American people, or American way of life onto

Japanese people...which is not really exist.

That which exist in its true sense is mutual understanding between one and the other. I think that is true Buddhism, in its true sense. We have...all human being or living being have,,,has fundamental tendency to try to find out some composure in identifying himself to others. If some worm or frog...frog stay in green leaves, they change their color to the green...into green. (Some is lost when tape is turned over). But we...hot to realize deeper nature which is called Buddha Nature, which is not various nature. Which is not one of the various nature, but which is the basic nature for various nature, deeper nature, deeper nature than we see. That is human tendency, you know, to identify ourselves to...to the majority. But, that is...for us, that is the nature to be aware of, or to be careful about, rather than to follow it with our eyes, our thinking mind, our five senses_____and our reason _____. That is the nature we should be careful about.

But most people, you know, make some excuse, numbering various nature we have. One by one, when we face to the problem we should know our nature, and we should be careful our nature, not to stop our, not to limit our basic nature, without any trouble. So it is important to know American way or Japanese way, but more important thing is to know our own cultural background, and to have eyes to see our each one's own cultural background, and to have eyes to see our each one's own cultural background and what kind of tendencies you have. If so, it may be very helpful for you to have Japanese friend. And for Japanese to come to America and study Japanese way or to have, to listen to criticism of American people. Then we will be aware of our tendency, which is difficult to...to notice. Not to, you know, not just to stick to American way or Japanese way, but to know our weak points. This kind of effort should be continued.

You think you have, you know. As you are in America, I think you, you may say: "We have no cultural background." But you have. If, you know...I noticed many characteristic of American people. That is your cultural background. And here, at Tassajara, what are you doing is not just American way or Japanese way. And we are studying what should be our human way, day after day. There may be many reasons why I came to American without knowing this kind of thing. When I came to America, what I thought was: "Anyway, we are all human beings so I think I can survive." That was what I knew, only thing what I knew. I, you know, I didn't know where is San Francisco, even. Anyway I came to, I bought a ticket and I came to America. That's all. And you know, I was rather angry if people say, you know: "He is Japanese." Why am I Japanese? Those who comet to America is American people, you know. Whatever nationality he is, they are all American people. Some of them must have come a long time ago, but all of them, anyway, except Indian...American Indian...they are people who came from other countries. Why they call me Japanese? You know, sometimes: "That is Japanese way." Why? I didn't know myself. But now Dick wrote me, I find, I found, (Dick wrote) "At last I found you typical Japanese." And I realized, "Oh, maybe so." Because there are many people like me.

It may take pretty long time to study the true relationship between various

people...various, various kinds of people, but I think we should start to study our basic human nature. And we should start to study our weak points. If you want to be really strong...your weak points you, you cannot be really, in its true sense...cannot be strong person. And if you don't know your weak point you will have various worry and you will have various problem. And you don't have real courage to do something. If you know your weak point, you know...because you know: "My weak point is here." ...so you know how to protect yourself from it. But if you don't know where is your weak point, you will, you must have protect yourself covering all parts of your body. Maybe best thing is to enter big bag. That may be the best way, but you cannot survive in that way, so you should know the weak point only, and protect weak point and extend strong arm, you know. If one...left arm is not so weak you should fight with right arm. If you don't know which is, which is stronger, you don't know what to do.

A scroll given to me by my teacher says: "Piece of stone in the air. Piece of, piece of stone in the air." Piece of stone in the air. It means that the created problem, not real problem. There is no stone in the air. There may be bubbles, you know, but there is no stone in the air, but we create, we hit against stone in the air, always. "Oh!" That is what we are doing. If you know, you know, real problem, you will not hit against so many stones which doesn't exist. Maybe sometime there may be stones in the air, even in the air, but there. there is...I don't think there is so many stones in the air. So if you know that there is stone, you know, but you know the way to go through the room even though several stones in the air. But most people have many stones in the air, not only one piece of stone. So that is the problem we have because we don't know ourselves.

Most, most of the problems are the problems we create because we don't know ourselves. If you know yourself you will have problems but that is actual problems which will help you, help your way of life. It is much better to have some problems than no problems. If you want to help others, the best way may not be to involve others in the problem you created. Not only you have various problem created by yourself, you may involve many people in your problems, in your created problems. If you stop doing it, that may be great help, I think.

I may, you know, point out something always, but it does not mean to criticize you. Because it may be difficult for you to, to know your weak point, I may point out something. So don't be angry with me too much, Okay?

Thank you very much.

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