

69-07-15

SUZUKI ROSHI LECTURE

Tuesday, July 15, 1969

Again, I have nothing in my mind. I think I want you to hit my head, you know. Like this. And try what kind of sound I make, my head make, makes. Would you hit my head with long, long talk, maybe an hour long. It will be a great help. Do you have some long, long stick to hit my bell? If you have some long stick...longer the better. Do you have some question? Long, long question. No question? Some question?

Question: Would you talk on *shikan taza*?

Roshi: *Shikan taza*? Oh. Practice of *shikan taza* or we say there is no such thing as *shikan taza* you know, actually. In comparison to koan practice we...because we don't use, you know, koan, people say that is *shikan taza*. "*Shikan*" means, you know, to be involved in zazen completely. That is "*shikan*." "*Taza*" is zazen. So to...if you practice our way, even without any gaining idea, or even without any idea of enlightenment, that is *shikan taza*. So sometime it may be actually...koan practice may be also *shikan taza*. When you are completely involved in koan practice, that is actually *shikan taza*. And there is...there may be various misunderstandings about *shikan taza*. If you think *shikan taza* is just to sit, you know, without making not much effort, you know. Just sit, like this, is *shikan taza*. And we say, when, you know, sometime we say when some...you have some image, you know, let it come and let it go away. That is *shikan taza* we say. It looks like, you know, if you just sit with some idea in my mind, or without some idea in our mind...if you just sit you know, that is *shikan taza*. But that is not actually *shikan taza*. Why we say "let the idea come in and let go away" means don't sit, you know, to...It means that actually, don't sit with some purpose. Some purpose of to free yourself from various idea. To free yourself from various idea (is) actually not to be bothered by various idea you will have in zazen. That is true but even though you are able to do it, that is not *shikan taza*. If you think that is *shikan taza* that is not *shikan taza* anymore. So *shikan*...if I explain what is *shikan taza*, in this way, to sit, you know, with some idea which may come to you...without, you know, being bothered by it...and just to sit is *shikan taza*...that is, you know: sometimes that is *shikan taza* but it is not always so. Do you understand what I am trying to say? It is rather difficult. But...if possible, of course, if you are able to sit without any, you know, image or thinking mind, that is, of course, better. But if I say..."When you practice *shikan taza* you will have many ideas, you know, so let the idea come in and let them go away. That is *shikan taza*." If I say so, it does not mean...it means that, for beginner, that is *shikan taza*. But for more advanced student or for student who sit for two, three years, if he remain in that practice, you know, it is not...I don't think he is practicing *shikan taza* in its true sense. That was very lazy practice. "Oh, this is *shikan taza*. I am practicing *shikan taza*. You know, Roshi said even (though) you have various idea in your mind, that is all right. Let them come in. Eventually it will go away. That is *shikan taza*. So I am practicing *shikan taza* everyday." If you understand in that way, that is not *shikan taza*.

So. I think if you...that is why, you know, I am, I want you right now to practice continuing breathing practice, instead of just to sit. Because you will have very lazy idea of *shikan taza*. So if you try to count your breathing, you will find out it is pretty difficult to practice counting breathing practice. Even though in counting your breathing, even though you are successful in counting breathing, just to count without mistake...that is not also *shikan taza*. So when you practice counting breathing practice you, of course you have to count, but at the same time you should be very careful with your posture. About your mudra, with straight back, and your mind should take care of every parts...every part of your physical condition. And you have...you must have good breathing. So with all of your effort, physical effort and mental effort, you should count your breathing. That is *shikan taza*.

For instance there is flower vase like this, you know. It is possible to hold it like this, you know. And it is, at the same time you can hold it like this. So if you, if I say "counting breathing practice or following breathing practice" it is same thing to hold the vase this part, by the handle, or by the mouth, you know. Anyway, you should hold all the vase, you know. If you take hold of this part...it doesn't (make) much difference whether you take hold of this part or this part. Anyway, you take hold of whole verse. So *shikan taza* points out means to take hold of whole being, or all of your mind and body, which include all the world. That is *shikan taza*.

If koan practice to take hold of this part, you know...people say this is koan practice. But for us this is *shikan taza* because in perfect koan practice, he is taking hold of whole vase. And counting breathing may be to take hold of this vase by your, by the mouth of the vase. Do you understand? No? So most teacher may say *shikan taza* is not so easy, you know. It is not possible to continue more than one hour, because it is intense practice, to take hold of all our mind and body by the practice which include everything. So in *shikan taza* our mind should pervade every part of our physical being. That is not so easy. Did you understand? If you actually practice zazen you will understand it you know. As I always say, to count your breathing like this, is not zazen, you know. Just to count our breathing is not counting breathing practice actually. With , you know, with your whole body and mind you should count our breathing.

You know, for instance, we say when you put your hand together or when you sit, you should feel as if you had one egg or two eggs under your arm like this. Don't crush it, don't drop it. That is how you put your arm in right position. It means that...in that way, you know, your arm should join our practice. If you are like this you are holding egg under your arm. If you are like this you are not holding egg. So your mind should be free from the idea of holding egg or not holding egg. You know. And...let our arm join our practice. If you are doing like this, your arm is not joining your practice. Maybe all of your body is doing your practice of your holding eggs practice. Instead of joining, instead of arm joining in your practice. Do you understand?

So in that way you should understand what is *shikan taza*. Does that explain? Do it make sense? Your eyes, you know, is not watching anything. Even though there is flower like this in front of you, in your practice, your eyes care not watching it. Even

though focus is around here, like this. Now I am watching you like this, but now I am not watching you. My focus is right there. You may see the difference, you know. You may see the difference in my eyes when I...I am watching something and when I am not watching anything. The...my eye focus is right there. Do you understand?

So, you know, if I say: "*Shikan taza* is to do...or like this is *shikan taza*...", is same thing I say: "To watch you is *shikan taza*." But it is not so actually. Even though people who do not have this kind of experience...maybe looks like same, you know. But if you carefully see my eyes you will find out the difference. Did you understand? You know, "One is everything..." We say, we have a kind of stock-term: "One is everything and everything is one." This is, you know...you can explain intellectually "One is everything and everything is one." Because everything is changing, moment after moment, one is not always one. It may change into something else, next moment. So actually, one is everything and everything is also one. So we say, if you pick up a part of net, you know, you will have whole, all the net, you know. It, it mean that our...it does not mean some intellectual explanation of the relationship one and many, but it points out actual practice. When I am not watching anything, you know, with this kind of eyes, if someone moves I will immediately catch you. If you don't, I, I don't see anyone. If someone move, you know, I, I will feel them. That kind of eyes covers everything. When you don't see anything, you see clearly everything. If you are watching something you lose the rest of the things. Hai?

Question: Is that just the ordinary practice? ordinary, natural mind...this is "not seeing anything but covering, still seeing everything."? That is the natural order of mind?

Roshi: Yeah. Natural order of mind. But as I said, you know, when you are counting something like in office work, you should be concentrated on one thing, on what you are doing. That practice is more the practice of...At Tassajara I explained various ways of understanding of things, and various ways of practice. Form is emptiness and emptiness is form. And Form is form means Emptiness, emptiness means to use this kind of eyes, you know. This is Emptiness is emptiness. Complete emptiness. And to be concentrated on something like this, you know, without any idea of anything, this is Form is form. But underlying spirit is the same but way of expressing feeling of zazen is different. So even though you are strictly doing something like this, still you have freedom from this. But _____people who don't, who do not have any experience of practice, _____something like this is...immediately he will be caught by flower. So there is still there is difference. But, but even though he is detached from this flower, he will not make any mistake _____things. His mind will be very articulate. But he has _____time freedom from it. So we, you know, when we...this is eventually, even though we practice zazen, we will come back to the starting point. Form is form. But when you come back to the original stage, it looks like you come back to the original stage, going around making trip all the way to heaven, come back to Earth again. But actually this is not the same level, so maybe as _____explains, you know, we are making this kind of trip. Like this. It looks like we came to the same point but level is not same. But this is, I think, just intellectual explanation of reality. Some other question?

Question: (inaudible)

Roshi: Vanish? Disappear. The idea you have should disappear, I think. If you, when you say there is flower, you know, but there is no such flower. Substantially exists, you know, in some particular way. Because it is always changing. It, in other word, it is always vanishing. (More of inaudible question by same person) But this kind of...if you really try to understand what does it mean everything, by "everything vanishes" you should know the only way is to practice zazen. If you want to bring that idea into practice, the only way is to practice zazen. So there there are two way: to have intellectual understanding of it it should be, everything should be like that, and everything is going in that way. That is, intellectually we can understand that. But real understanding...not understanding, but I don't know...if you accept that truth, actually you must practice zazen. That is the only way to have direct experience of the teaching or philosophy of Buddhism. Some other questions? Hai?

Question: Could you talk about guilt? When I am listening to you...when I am not listening to you, when my mind wanders off I feel bad about it. But then my mind wanders off to my feeling bad about it, and then I think I shouldn't feel bad about it and the "shouldn't" itself makes me feel guilty. I know what I am supposed to think but I can't think that way.

Roshi: Yes. You cannot think that way. That is, you know, when you feel bad, about it, it is already, you know, you...you are cut off practice. You are not practicing true way. You are just thinking about it. Sometime you are making some excuse, you know. To feel bad about it means at the same time, you are finding some good excuse. The same activity...no, no: different activity based on same impulse. You don't want to be bad so you feel bad. So, you know, in that way you cannot solve, you cannot find out your own way just by finding out some reason why you did it, or some teaching to justify your...what you have done. You are far away from the real practice. So, anyway, what you have done will create some effect. That...it is inevitable for some acts to create some result. So it is not matter of bad or good, you know. Anyway, you will have the result of it. So, you know, Buddha is very fair to everyone. You cannot escape from what you have done. _____it is more than to say you did something bad, you know. If you _____; if you understand your life in that way, there is no more, no more of good or bad already. You may feel...sometime you will find _____excuse for it, but it doesn't make any difference. Do you understand? That much is very true, I think.

If so, "what you should do" is, will be the next question. So naturally you will be very, very careful what you will do. Not because people say, people may say something...people may be critical with you or not because we have various precepts. If you make that kind of effort, you know, people will have very good feeling about...with you, I think. And you may feel very good when you accept the truth of cause an effect completely. If you are ready to accept the result of what you have done, that is the only way to be free from what you have done, to go beyond the idea of good and bad. Hai.

Question: It seems to me that in every one of us there is an animal that lives inside of us, there is a human being, and there is a Buddha. And they all need different food. How do you go about feeding the different parts of you? Something maybe good food for the Buddha, but with the animal, he wants some meat!

Roshi: He wants meat. But he is not so greedy as a human being. Human being wants to eat meat and some Buddha's food. That is human being, you know. So that is not just human being. Buddha's teaching is not just for human being. Even though the animal doesn't _____, they are not so greedy, but they are not so greedy as human being. So we have some special food, you know, because of the human nature. So I don't know which is better. Human being or animal. I don't know which is better. But anyway, everyone has food provided by Buddha, you know. And some special being like human being has some more feed, you know. Food. To reduce human being, like animal maybe, in some way. So my understanding may be opposite to your understanding, you know. I think human being is worst animal maybe. That is why we need Buddha's mercy, badly. Hai?

Question: Could you speak to us of bowing? Bowing and taking refuge.

Roshi; Bowing? Taking refuge. Taking refuge is not to...you know, good translation. Taking refuge is to, you know, to protect yourself in Buddha's home, maybe like that. It...it is so, but if you know how to protect yourself, that translation may work, but "take refuge in Buddha" looks like to escape from this world and to go to Buddha, you know. But it is not actually so. To be one with Buddha is "to take refuge in Buddha." Or to be Buddha is to "take refuge in Buddha!! There is no special home for Buddha, you know, or for us. The home is always within ourselves. So it is not to go to Buddha but to find out Buddha Nature within ourselves is to take refuge in Buddha. To bow to Buddha is same thing, you know. To bow to the Buddha on the altar is not actual meaning of to bow to Buddha. So Buddha is rather behind you, you know, not in front of you. "I am your children. May I help you? If you have something to do, I will do it." That feeling is to bow to Buddha. To find ourselves as disciple of Buddha. So even though Buddha passed away so many years ago, we are Buddha and we are disciple of Buddha. We should not lose his way. And so we have to behave. And we should know what he will tell us when he is with us right now. With this kind of attitude we should bow to Buddha. As if you...you help your mother or father. As if you serve something to your parents. That is how you bow to Buddha. Bow is just, you know, one of the many ways of expressing our sincerity to him. As if he is alive and he is with us. Do you understand? That is how, why we bow to Buddha.

Question: I don't understand "the Dharma is the greatest gift." How do we give the Dharma?

Roshi: To give the Dharma...there is, you know, various...That is very complicated. If I want to clarify your question. it is necessary to give you long, long lecture. What is Dharma, What is Buddha, What is Sangha, you know. What is the...what is the Scripture, you know. What is building. Or what is equipment to offer something to

Buddha. What is priest. Who is Buddha? There is...we have to study this kind of philosophy, maybe.

Question: Would you say how to give a gift unselfishly then?

Roshi: How to give gifts is, you know...In short, maybe to practice zazen will be the greatest gift you can give to anyone. In short. You know we practice zazen because just to read the Scripture, just to understand Scripture and just to give some virtue of...virtuous meaning of Scripture to other people is not good enough. It is not best way. So we practice zazen because that practice is complete. By our practice we can experience or we can actually accept the Dharma, in its true sense. And in that way we can transmit our Dharma to others, in its complete sense. Why that is so is...need pretty long explanation about what is Dharma. And we could not (be) satisfied with the explanation of the Dharma. Or we couldn't (be) satisfied with the written teaching. Or dead teaching. We wanted some, you know, some actual Dharma rather than dead Dharma written in Scriptures or understood by philosophical mind. I think you must have some idea of why we practice zazen and why practice of zazen is so important. Hai?

Question: Does a Zen Master suffer in a different way than his students suffer?

Roshi: Same way. If he is different, you know, I don't think he is good enough. Form is form. We...we must make that kind of effort. After you have understood what is zazen and what is practice, what is Dharma and what is Sangha..and various interpretation of our teaching. So we must try to forget all about that kind of, you know, confusion. And we should be able to just do something as people may _____. It is also...it is very important practice. After you understood what is Buddhism.

Question: Suffering, then, has something to do with Form is form?

Roshi: Yes. We have to...some people try to help people in the _____of Emptiness if emptiness. Like this, you know, without watching _____particular...In the form of Form is form rather than Emptiness is emptiness.

The great poet Basho expressed this kind of feeling through his form. He is always, you know, crying with people. He is always full of tears in...in his eyes. That is stage of Form is form. He was completely good friend of children and poor people. And sometime, you know, once and a while very learned scholar or...he was very...he himself was a very learned scholar, but his practice is always in the form of Form is form, rather than Emptiness is emptiness.

Question: Can you give an example of the practice of Form is form, and an example of Emptiness is emptiness, also?

Roshi: To be completely the friend of people is Form is form practice. And Emptiness is

emptiness is to help people in, you know,...to give big encouragement to people or to force some people to attain enlightenment. If you attain enlightenment you will not suffer so much, you know. With big slap. That is more Rinzai way, you know. Soto way is not to say: "This is zazen; or: You should attain enlightenment." We do not say so. We will be completely with...the friend of ordinary people. We take form of various...if, you know, you see a woman is suffering, he will be a woman. If he see...like Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. That is more practice of Form is form.

Question: I thought you had said that you cannot really help people in that way. Yet that is Soto way.

Roshi: Yes. You know, if you try to follow Soto way without, you know, without having this true experience of zazen, even though you give people something special, that will not help. Unless you have real quality, after you get, going through those practice of Form is emptiness and Emptiness is form and Emptiness is emptiness...and then Form is form. Then you can help people. But even though Form is emptiness, you know, but if you don't...if you do not have real experience of actually Form is emptiness, you know, then you cannot help people, even though you have a lot of money to help. That is what I said.

Question: What do the words mean: I vow to save all sentient beings?

Roshi: I vow to save all sentient beings. And sentient beings are numberless, you know; I vow to save them. So, it means we will continue our practice forever, in short. Because there is no other way; it is not matter of "I will help." You know, there is no choice. The only way is continue to help others, that's all...all what we can do. And that way is the only way which continue forever. Do you understand? To help sentient beings is to continue our practice through zazen practice as I explained. That is "to help sentient beings," "to save sentient beings."

Question: Can a doctor or a psychiatrist help sentient beings?

Roshi: Sometime you may need him, you know;. But he will not save you, you know, in its complete sense. We cannot help people in its complete sense, actually. But we are, we will continue incessantly to help people, even though our way is not complete. There is...there is some slight difference. We should know that there is no complete remedy for sickness. No complete remedy. If you know that, you can discuss with psychiatrist. He may help...help you, but if you think he will help you completely, it means that you are...you are a big burden for him, you know. Okay? Hai.

Question: Is enlightenment a complete remedy?

Roshi: No.

Question: Why not?

Roshi: Why not? Do you think...I said, you know, there is no complete remedy. To think there is some complete remedy is delusion. Cannot be so. Even Buddha cannot help, you know, in its ordinary sense, in its dualistic sense. He will help us. We are enlightened being without being helped. When this...maybe you can say in this way, too: Even...because we are not perfect we are Buddha. You may say so. If you are...if you think you are perfect, you know, that is delusion. Perfect one is not...cannot be someone, some special person who has all-mighty power. That kind of, you know, that is just idea of something. Idea of God. The idea of God but not real God. So toilet paper may be God, you know, in this sense. So, you know, toilet paper or flower or everything is God. If you understand toilet paper with some idea. But in reality God is God because he is beyond our conceptual world. Hai.

Question: In one of the sutras, it says that a Bodhisattva practicing the *Paramitas* should dedicate the merit involved to the _____. And I am having a hard time understanding what merit is. I mean, what you should do with it. On one side it seems that if you do good works, good works will be returned, but you shouldn't have selfish ideas about the return of merit. And the other side is what you said earlier about being willing to accept the consequences or effects of our actions. I think that is the definition you gave.

Roshi: The merit, you know. I don't know what do you mean by merit. (The boy says what he is asking Roshi). Maybe so. As Bodhidharma said, "No merit." No merit is merit. So we have to get through the idea of "no merit" before we discuss what is "merit." "No merit" means to believe in the strict rules of cause and effect. Even Buddha must suffer his karma, you know. If, as long as he is historical Buddha, he must suffer his own karma. But because we couldn't (be) satisfied (with) the idea of Buddha as historical Buddha, we started to have deeper idea of Buddha. Like Sambhogakaya Buddha or Dharmakaya Buddha. So you know, Scripture tells us...if you read Scripture without having any idea of zazen practice, it looks like some myth or, you _____, maybe Bodhisattva is someone who has miraculous power. But _____it is not so. Those sutra is based on deep understanding of practice. That is why, without any contradiction, they can dis_____Buddha's miraculous power. It looks like very mystic, you know, _____of myth. But we cannot criticize it, you know, because it is _____very profound philosophy, and very deep experience of Zen _____. You cannot criticize it. That is, you know, why Mahayana _____...or that is why *Lotus Sutra* is called "King of all the Sutra." Hai.

Question: When we say disease, I think it is an understanding of no disease. By that I mean. I don't think there is a perfect remedy because I don't think there is anything wrong that needs a remedy. If I have what I call a disease and I go to meditate and am absorbed by pure practice and I get up and I have no disease, is that a delusion?

Roshi: Disease is, you know, if you pick up, you know, some painful part of your body, you know, thinking that "here is disease"...that is disease in its usual sense. If you have headache here, and I have disease here. But why your head is painful is not just because of your disorder of your head...brain. And it means that disorder of your whole

body. And our organic system, our body, you know, try to control, try to have more smooth, harmonious living activity. So that is why we have pain here, you know. But that is not because this part is in disorder, but maybe your tummy is not so good. Maybe you didn't sleep well. So even though you cut off, you know...you have operation on your head, I don't think it will help completely, unless you..you should find out in what, what your natural organic activity is going. When you realize this point...actually we...even though you have...to have pain is not disease, you know. Still you are in right order. To pain...if you are not painful when you should be painful, that is disorder. So even though you have operation here, you know, you think for a while it is the remedy. But actually your cause of trouble is still remain as before. So I don't think...disease we say, but it is not so simple, you now, like mechanics. So to some extent we, I think, when we are ill we should pai..., we should be patient...patient enough to...to suffer. After you suffer pretty long time you will understand you r physical condition better, and you will find out perfect remedy for it. So in this sense I think no one is completely healthy. Everyone is sick...sick people. If you say "disease," you know...if we say...you say you are sick person, all of us are sick people, I think. So the point is to find out, to understand your physical condition is very important. Rather than to be caught by idea of disease. For instance, you know, the stomach is very...is very closely related to your head, brain. So when your mind become calm, your tummy will be healthy without having operation in your tummy. When you think you have disease here, I think you are actually creating disease here. It will make your tummy weak, you know, by _____of disease. But if you understand yourself better, and if you know how to control your mind, it will be a great help to your physical condition. For instance, I was very weak. My tummy was very weak. And doctor told me to have operation on my tummy, to cut off a a part of it. And my friend who live near temple had also bad stomach, and had operation. And he told me: "You should go and have operation. He (doctor) cut off one-third of my tummy and I feel very good," he said. So I thought if it is possible fro him to cut off one-third of his tummy, I thought tummy is not so subtle thing, even though a doctor cut off one-third of the tummy. It doesn't matter for the tummy. If it is wrong maybe better not to be...better not to have operation. It doesn't make much difference, I thought. It means that, you know, our mind (?) is so strong. So I didn't have operation, and the doctor saw me whenever I was weak, you know. He was amazed why I, you know, why I am so...why I have so, why I could survive, you know, without having operation. I don't know why, but soon after that we started building our...mending our temple, and I became so busy that I forgot all about my tummy problem. And now my tummy is not so strong, but I have no problem with my tummy. And, but I, I have problem of cough, you know. So I, I always tell them to tell people, even though your tummy is so strong, you cannot give your tummy to other people after you...you don't want, when you don't need it. In other words, after you die, you cannot give your tummy to other person. So if your tummy is strong enough to give you some nourishment until you die, it may be all right. So some natural order is more important than to have some strong remedy for it. Leave it like that, you know. Let it survive as long as possible. So if our body is always in some harmony, I think it is good enough. One more question? One more question, please. Hai.

Question: When we try to practice hard in the city where we have a lot of freedom, it

seems that sometimes we can become caught by our own way and become too narrow and hurt ourselves too much, by trying to practice hard in our own way. What should we do?

Roshi: Umm. In city, you know, our, our way looks like very narrow, you know, narrow approach. But actually it is not so. It is basic, you know, our practice is directed to the basic problem we have, you know, always. So you cannot compare our practice to some other way of life. It is necessary for you, for sometime, maybe to be caught by narrow idea of practice, which is not actually narrow. But if you are concentrated on some...on our practice, eventually you will find out that is not narrow, that was not narrow practice. But before you find out true meaning of our practice, you may think this is our practice. So even though you think you are caught by narrow idea of practice, I think you should continue it without some conviction...with some conviction, excuse me. Without any doubt.

Thank you very much.

EZT – early SFZC transcript – 69-07-15
