

70-08-04 [70-08-01] SUZUKI-ROSHI SESSHIN LECTURE

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Transcribed by Meg Brown

In this sesshin, I have explained the context of our practice and at the same time the meaning of rules and precepts. But for us, precepts, observation of precepts and practice of zazen os same thing, you know, not different. As to our everyday life and practice, zazen practice...after,...sesshin, we will have ordination ceremony for Paul and Reb, and then we will have lay ordination ceremony for the students, old students who have been practicing zazen...who, who had practiced zazen for three years before 1967; to show, that is why, I explained the meaning of our practice, zazen practice, way of our zazen practice referring to the precepts, and what is rules, whether you like it or not it is something with you always, before, even before you are born, you are born. We say, if there is something, there is rule about it, or in it (laughs). There is nothing without rules, you know. That something is there, means that some rule is there. That is rule...but before we, you know, know our true nature, or, so me truth or rules, which is always with you, you think when...when someone explain how you exist, or what is, you know, your true nature, then, that is Buddha speaking, not mine. Nothing to do with me. (unclear)...if I am Buddhist, maybe we have to observe Buddha's precepts, but I am not Buddhist you know, I am not yet Buddhist, so, that rule is nothing to do with me; but fortunately or unfortunately, if I go to Zen Center you know, to listen to lecture we have to behave like other students behave. That is rules. You may understand in that way, but, where Zen Center exists, there is Zen Center's rules. As you have your true nature...and, to, to be ordained, or to become a Buddhist disciple-Buddha's disciple-Buddha's disciple is to receive the precepts..., but just precepts, as I explained, actually, precepts, you have...which you have essentially, which you essentially have, originally have but before you...know yourself, you know, through practice pretty long time, you don't know your true nature..., when you, for an instance...,when you cook rice for the first time, there is rule how you cook rice, so according, you know to the way or rules you know, to cook rice, you can, you know, first wash your rice, so according, you know, soak in water, maybe for five hours, or wash it and take it in basket to get rid of water and keep in the basket for five hours and adding twenty percent more water...to the rice, and burn it...for maybe twenty minutes or more (laughs) then (laughing) you will (laughs) have a beautiful you know, way of cook rice (laughing) So you know that if you practice zazen, (laughs)...if you observe precepts, you will feel good person, like Buddha (laughs), but, but if you have no experience of cooking rice, you know, even though you know how to cook it but when you cook it for the first time, if I-if you, you dip it in, if you, after you wash it, is it too late, two or three hours before you cook it, oh that's terrible (laughs) you wait two or three hours before you start to cook, and even though...you, start to cook, you know, you will worry, you know,...before you (?) well cooked rice and it is, it needs some, water enough? Maybe it needs wants more water, so then someone will tell him, tell you, "No, don't add any more water; that is OK."

"No, water (laughs) is not, I think water is not enough, so maybe I will add some more water. Yes."

"No."

"Yes."

"No." (laughs) That kind of trouble arise...

It is same thing with our practice, you know. If you just practice zazen, you know, according to the instruction, you will be a good person anyway. (laughs) But because you have, more experience of, you know, perfect practice, you worry, you know. That is, you know, you will have some doubt in your practice and if your teacher says "Don't move (laughs) twenty minutes of practice," then you may say, "Oh, my!, that's awful!" But the same thing, you will, you know, you, (unclear) before you see the well-cooked rice. When you make soup, you know, if you make soup according to the recipe, how much shoyu sauce or salt to put, you know, you will have a good soup...But, you know, you perhaps you want to make it sure, so you taste the soup: "Oh, oh. It will not do. We may need some more salt; maybe better to add shoyu sauce to it. (Unclear) recipe says you know, shoyu sauce, but maybe better to put some (laughs) (more?) soy sauce; you will taste it, maybe we need (laughing) more soy sauce (laughing)...(sentence unclear)...." "Oh, it needs a little more salt." And finally you have a very salty (laughing) soup...

That is, you know, expensive (?), you know, practice, you know. To make a great effort in your practice is good, but you should even though you make...hard discipline it is the same thing, you know, or sometimes, you will...your practice will be lost. So from the students' side, you know, it looks like (hard?); from the Buddha's side, teacher's side, there is no problem. So, for students, as I said, something, which looks like rules or precepts or prohibitory rules is not; Dogen Zenji said, true Buddhism. At first all, all the precepts looks like rules, but we must have it, you know...So ordination ceremony is...to trust Buddha, or trust, to trust Buddha's precepts, or to trust your teacher; even though you don't because you don't know exactly, you are not get through, Buddha's practice. So it is necessary, for you,...trust in Buddha, and force some rules to you. That is necessary, for you, for students, but, Buddha may say "I am not forcing anything," you know; the rules you should observe is, essentially something you have essentially. Originally you have rules. That is what Buddha may say, we say, if you practice zazen, there is there is, you know, there there is Buddha Nature, true nature, that is just expression of true nature; to observe, when you observe precepts, there there is your true nature. But if someone, you know, watch, see our practice, it looks like teacher is forcing some rules to many students...Here is you know, bamboo sprout, you know, growing every, everyday. Before bamboo becomes bamboo, you know, it will be bamboo sprout, two feet long, or three feet long. It is growing very rapidly. But even though, you know, bamboo sprout is completely, looks like completely different, you know, bamboo sprout is really bamboo; and when, before it become bamboo, it should be in that shape, you know, it cannot be big, perfect bamboo, as you use. But if you don't (sit?) and don't know bamboo through and through, you know, you may say...someone may say, you know, "He is fooling us," you know (laughs), then this is

bamboo (laughing) this is not bamboo. Bamboo it is more taller (laughs) and with leaves, but this, this has no leaves. (laughing) Moreover, it is covered by something, some funny thing (laughing); it cannot be bamboo. But, when it is young, you know, there is...there must be some from, you know, even though, which is different from the mother bamboo. But no one actually thought it bamboo sprout in that way; but most people says: without understanding bamboo through and through, they have some idea of bamboo; we have some idea about our way of life and, human nature, but unfortunately, most of us do not know human nature through and through, like Buddha understood human nature. You may say, Buddha's teaching is the teaching of human nature. He will be man or saint who had enormous understanding unusual understanding about our human nature. So that is why, you know, he, set up that kind of precepts. So from Buddha's time, it is our true nature, but from our time, it looks like something funny, you know. Buddha teaching us, you know, forcing us to be a (laughs) bamboo sprout. You may understand in that way. That is the problem. How you solve the pro-; this...problem is for us, you know, to, trust the precepts, and to join his practice. For Buddha, you know acknowledging, students, quality or true nature which is same as Buddha, and help students to be a Buddha. That is, from Buddha's viewpoint, that is, his way. Actual, our, zazen practice is called practice of...practice one with enlightenment. It means that from Buddha's from Buddha it is enlightenment; from us, you know, it is practice. But actual practice is...actually, for us it is, training; for Buddha it is expression of true nature. Actually it is so. That is, you know, the-if you say our practice is expression or practice, you cannot agree with that. But, if you say, our practice is training to be a Buddha, Buddha will not agree with your understanding. And both is true. For you, it is training that is true; for Buddha it is expression of Buddha Nature. And he accept our practice, whether it is perfect or imperfect...

For you, so, for you, to become a Zen student is...even thought it is not so, you should, you know, receive precepts, even though you cannot accept it through and through, first thing is you should accept it. As you cook rice according to the, you know, instruction, if you an do it just, you know, according to the instruction, that is best, but even though you, you know, you are confused, you know, while you are, cooking, it can be-it is-it may be OK but anyway you should start our way, and you should try, you know, try to trust our instruction., or precepts, or zazen practice. This is you know, actually to...how you join our practice, why you receive our precepts...When I was working (laughs) I was working on a stone with students at Tassajara, you know, when I asked him to hit, you know, the stone to cut it, you know; the stone has naturally, originally some, you know, layers, you know, stripes or layers; I know if he continue to hit it, it will be, you know, broken in two pieces. But you know, if ...because my student didn't you know, haven't...won't have the experience of cutting, you know, so while he was, he became tired of hitting (chuckles) but I, I, I was quite sure, you know, he will cut it (laughing). It is the same thing, you know, the teacher knows, you know, it will, it will be cut, but student doesn't know so he doubts, but at last, you know, it was cut all of a sudden in two: ppt! (laughs) That is practice. It is not so easy, you know, it will, it looks like almost impossible, sometimes, but after long, long experience, you know of, various teachers, not only Dogen Zenji, you know or Bodhidharma, you know, we will know what kind of stone human being is. So if we continue to practice in this way,...he will be

clearly, you know, cut. We know that. That is you know, Buddha's, Buddhist way, and Buddha knows that, and even though you don't know it, if you continue to do it, it will work. So, too, you know, to start to trust, you know, the way, Buddhist way, is how-why you join order, actually. And we say, when you join order, order, and started to hit, hit the stone same place over and over, and when it is broken in two, you don't know, you know, why, by the last one it was broken, or by the first one it was broken. You know, it is difficult to know. Anyway, first hit, was working; that is clear, So we say, even though our practice is not perfect, as long as you are practicing our way, that is enlightenment itself. That is how you cut the stone, how you become a Buddha...

And for Buddha, you know, become a Buddha...even though he become a Buddha, you know, he cannot stay, Buddha stays, he will naturally start to help others. And he will continue his practice forever knowing, because he knows nature, and because he knows, you know, almost all the people does not know human nature so well, so he cannot trust their own true nature. And they will be confused, so for Buddha, he cannot start helping others too. And in that way, you know, Buddha start again our practice, join our practice. He will practice with us always. So Buddha become a student, and student eventually become a Buddha. And Buddha ...and we student is always one. That is the picture of our practice. To have this kind of relationship...between Buddha and you, or teacher and disciple is very important. Or, without this relationship, you know, Buddhism cannot survive, or exist, for human being to be human being. So Buddha's teaching is how to be a human being human, and how to for Buddha be Buddha. Although there are too many human beings, sentient beings, or Buddha, but actually-essentially, it is one. Who knows human nature is Buddha; do not have, do not know human nature through and through is sentient beings...

In ordination, when...when you join our order, you know, you will receive a robe which was designed by Buddha, which was worn by Buddha. And to receive his robe means to trust him. It is so important that to have Buddha that, we, you know, to encourage our way-seeking-mind, to be free from our doubt, to have strong face in our way, or to encourage our way, we wear robe. That is set up by Buddha and used by Buddha. But nowadays, it is a symbol! Symbol of teaching, symbol of his precepts, spirit, and it is expressed by its color and by the material you use, and size (unclear), you know, we express Buddha's teaching, too. Not just symbol, but to understand...teaching which is expressed in robe is also necessary. So for, for us, it is the teaching itself, and it is the Buddha' spirit itself. Even though we cannot use it to protect us from cold or from hot weather...

You may say, you know, listen to it, knowing that is may be difficult to understand, to accept Buddha's teaching as, I am talking about it without any result or changes, or without any modification. This is our, the traditional understanding of human nature, and with deeper, deep understanding of human nature there is big difference. It is quite natural for us, to accept, the teaching, is difficult. For you, maybe difficult, and for us too, for us too, for us Japanese too. You may say that (end of tape).
