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SUZUKI-ROSHI SESSHIN LECTURE # 5

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I think, as Yoshimura Sensei told you the other night, Zen masters have some humorous element in their lives and we know even more after their deaths how humorous they were. Only when he has an understanding that is more than real can he be humorous. So humor is more real than reality. Reality is not so real. If you see a comic, that is more real than usual pictures are. I think, because Zen masters have something real, they can always be humorous. When they say something usual, in their mind they are always expressing it as if they are drawing some comic. For them, it is a comic, but for us it is a very real and serious thing.

When I was at Eihei-ji, Kumozawa Zenji was Kannin. In sesshin he gave us a talk when he was tired. It was the third or fourth day. He said, "A sparrow has broken a *torii*." Do you know *torii*? It is a shrine gate. A sparrow broke a *torii* made of stone! And he started to explain how the sparrow did it. I still remember: (He recites a sentence in Japanese). And he said "Do you understand?" He repeated it several times, but no one laughed, you know, because he was so serious. *Fumio* (fundeiro?) sometimes means, "stepping on the stone," and at the same time it means "to break." How is it possible for a sparrow to break a stone gate? But we thought, "That is a Zen story! What he means must be something deep." But he was just joking with a serious manner. As he is trained very well by zazen practice, he is always serious, but he is always humorous at the same time. It is not just seriousness, but some element of happiness or joy is in it; he is always relaxed. Recently I found out that it was a joke, but I don't think many people know that it was a joke. We didn't talk about that story anymore. As we were young, we did not like such ridiculous stories. Serious students, you know: "Oh no! He is fooling us." We didn't like it at all. So we didn't talk about it any more. But quite recently, "Oh! He was fooling us when we were practicing seriously."

When he was dying, do you know what he did? For maybe ninety-six years he was fooling us. You know, when he was almost dying, he stretched his arm for the water pitcher, and the *jiisha* gave him the pitcher. And he swallowed the pitcher of water and said, "Kaaaaa!!" (Roshi gives a tremendous shout!) And he was no more. He vanished from this world. No. It is terrible. And you know, newspaper reporters and famous Zen masters admired his death, but I think maybe he was fooling us. That was what he was doing, you know.

When he visited my home town when I was in Japan five years ago, I tried to persuade him to come to America. For a pretty long time, he asked various questions about America, and he looked like he agreed. But after explaining it to him for a long, long time, he said, "Oh, that would be a good job for Takashina Roshi. Not for me, maybe Takashina Roshi." He was always like that.

An old, old lady offered him a very sweet and very expensive melon. She brought it to him; I was with her, and he was watching it, you know, "Oh, very good, very good, but I don't like it. I will rather give it to my students," he said. And he clapped his hand-- "Take it to your room!," right in front of her. But when he did [he did] it so nicely, she could not be angry with him. So I don't know, it is pretty difficult to know which kind of mind he had. He is always the same, but what he does is always something different. I knew him pretty well, but recently I am finding out many things about him--not new things, but I am finding out what he was doing, little by little. I think that is real comedy.

And at the same time, Yashida Roshi was talking about anti-Buddhism or anti-Buddha or non-Buddha. I think that is exactly what he was doing. What he did is something more than we can understand or see. So even though he does something, we cannot take it literally. Actually he isn't doing anything. He is just moving his mouth, that's all. I don't know how to understand, but how to be like him was already shown to us by Dogen Zenji. Living with people, and living in confusion, always outside of the confusion--that is our core of practice.

Oh, by the way, I have new glasses, so I must use them you know, and I have something to read here. Dogen Zenji said, "The third Patriarch in China says, 'The first principle, the supreme way is not difficult. If you stay away from discrimination, whatever you see, that is it.' Hearing this statement of the Third Patriarch of China, many people may say every dharma or everything is not good or bad in itself, and there is nothing which is right or wrong. So the only way is that according to one's nature, one should intuitively take his path. And some people may say you should not talk about the supreme way, but top draw a circle or thrust a fist, or knock the floor with a staff, or slap a student with your hands, or to give a big cry is the way to express the supreme way." But Dogen Zenji said here, "But those understanding are not right, or they are still the understanding of dwelling in the cave." That is what Dogen said about the supreme way. But in *Bendowa*, he says, "What is the supreme way? Buddhas and Patriarchs appear because of this supreme way, and they do not observe anything but the supreme way. If there is a chance for the Dharma, Dharma will appear." And he also said, "The supreme way is like a big *kanchijo*,"--I don't know the Sanskrit name for it--a big bird which can cover the whole world with his wings. If he beats them once over the sea, a tidal wave will arise, and the bottom of the sea will be exposed. And it is so big that when the bottom of the sea is exposed, he will see dragons, some of which are alive and some of which are already dead because of the big tidal wave. And he may see many fish which are already dead, but he only picks up a dragon which is still alive. He maybe the most discriminative animal in the world. Dogen Zenji says that is a good example of no discrimination. But when Dogen Zenji says so, discrimination is strict discrimination. When he says so, he has changed the angle(?) already. You have discrimination in the realm of thinking mind or imagination or feeling or emotional activity. You say right or wrong, good or bad, agreeable or disagreeable, or you like it or don't like it. But how it is possible to reach the supreme way which is beyond discrimination is what Dogen Zenji is talking about.

By the way, Shakyamuni Buddha didn't talk about Self or about God or Buddha. He

talked about him figuratively, but he didn't point out anything as Buddha. As Yoshimura Sensei pointed out, if he described something about a deity or absolute being or God, he may have been the founder of another Hindu religion. That is very true, but that was not the reason why he didn't talk about it. I am not opposing him (Yoshimura Sensei?) at all, because that was a very interesting point. So I thought about it more. If some religion appears, and some teaching is described or left by someone, you may have various priests who will follow his teaching. And some priests can live on it, explaining or serving his teaching. "This is a very valuable teaching. It is the supreme way--why don't you come and listen to me?" And he will be such and such--that is how to maintain our activity. (?) So in that way many things will appear which are not the supreme way. Instead of the supreme way, we will have many secondary ways, which should be rejected. Buddha said you shouldn't use magic power or be an astrologist. You shouldn't fool people with this kind of knowledge or power. He was so strict on this point, he did not allow any religion to be like that, including his own. He did talk about what exists in what way, something that exists beyond our world. But I think he was tired of the kind of religious activity going on at that time. So his main point was to establish something which is very pure, very accurate, and very real. The similes (?) he used, or the way he talked about it was very mystical, but what he was talking about is exactly what we are doing. If you know yourself, you can understand anything mysterious he was saying, and if you understand what he was saying, you will understand yourself more. A more real self will be found from reading his works or listening to his words.

Dogen Zenji also, when he says the *kanchijo* only picks up living dragons, is talking now about our practice. So his instruction about our practice is very accurate, very strict. It is more strict, more particular than this bird. He doesn't want anything if it is not real, he doesn't practice if it is not right practice. He practices only when he sees that it is right. So what he says is not just the usual way of paradoxical speaking about Zen. He has an accurate point, and his whole effort is directed towards our everyday practice. He doesn't ignore anything. So that is why we believe in his practice. If we follow him, we will have that kind of--not power--but ability; or that kind of possibility is there only when we observe his way. When I say "accurate," there is no mysterious meaning in it. You can use your own judgement. If you don't accept it, if your thinking mind doesn't accept it, according to Dogen Zenji, there is no need to observe it. So everything we do should be explained fully, but that explanation is not good enough. When you accept his teaching here, now, you should observe it with your body. Your understanding is not so important when you start to practice, but before that, maybe understanding is important.

I became interested in Buddhism because Buddhists explain things very well and accurately, and we cannot comment on it. All the commentary is already given for the various teachings. You might think of some direct comment for it, and think maybe it is a good understanding of the teaching. But if you see some other book, someone already did it! There is almost nothing to find out, almost nothing to say, it is so accurate. And many different naughty students played big arguments about our scriptures. (?) So it is possible for us to make full use of mind, but the point is, it is not

possible to have the supreme way by thinking. If you accept our teaching logically, with critical eyes, then you should start our practice which has been provided by those strict teachers. So in one way, non-discrimination is our way. On the other hand, when you do something, you must be very sincere.

I think we are now making pretty good effort in Zen Center, but there are many dangers. Unless we have a very strict eye on ourselves, we will lose our way. Even if you can talk about Buddhism, even if you have a very very deep logical understanding, that is not enough. So non-discrimination means to discriminate that which can be discriminated. That is, discrimination of discrimination is true discrimination. And when you discriminate your discrimination, the next thing you should do is to have some practice of non-discrimination established by someone who is very discriminative. So, you know, I think you can spend this life and the next life--if there is a next life--or forever working on this. Anyway, we human beings can (must?) survive on this big world, or else we will be lost. We will be lost, but nothing will happen. Maybe that is okay, to say so is quite easy, but I don't think you can accept that. So as long as we live, we should work on this and protect ourselves from something wrong or fake. We should follow only something right, something true. That is our spirit and the spirit of practice.

Thank you very much.

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