

71-02-13

SUZUKI-ROSHI LECTURE

February 13, 1971. San Francisco

We have been practicing sesshin, so I feel I haven't seen some of you for a long, long time. In one sense, sesshin means to calm down, to have calmness of your mind in our activity and in our practice. But what is meant by calmness of your mind maybe pretty difficult for you to understand. For instance, you may think that if you seclude yourself in some remote mountain or in the zendo and practice without saying anything, without eating any good food or any food which will give you pleasure or excitement, and without hearing anyone's opinion, you will have calmness of mind. That will help, but it is not the calmness of mind which we mean. If you think that is calmness of mind, you will worry about losing it, Then the calmness of your mind is already not there. If you are afraid of losing it or being disturbed by someone, that is already not calmness of your mind.

So real calmness of our mind is, as I told you in sesshin, to have oneness of the mind with your surroundings. I referred to Tozan Zenji's words, "You are not him, but he is you." Seeing yourself in the mirror, you say, "This is me," but that is not you in its true sense, because you think, "This is me, this is me." That's dualistic. When you say, "I am the image in the mirror," a strong idea of "I" is here. "Who am I?"--you are always seeking who you are. "Maybe someday I will understand who I am," and, "Oh, now I have met myself. I am this image in the mirror." But this is you in a dualistic sense--me and the image. When instead you say, "This is me," the image comes first and you follow. There is not a very strong idea of you; you are rather involved in something you see. At that time you are one to some extent--sometimes completely, sometimes incompletely, but not much of an idea of you is included. So when you say, "This is me," it is more like the calmness of your mind in which you can see things.

This morning I brought some material for you. I want to refer to Buddha's last words. The translation goes like this: "The Merit of Seclusion: If you desire quietude in action and joy, always avoid confusion and noise. Live alone in a quiet retreat. The man who lives in solitude is respectfully worshiped by Indra and all the gods." And it goes on. Dogen Zenji gave a title to this part of Buddha's last words: "How to Enjoy Calmness." In Japanese or Chinese, it is "*Jakujo*." "*Jak*" means "no sound," or "no voice, not much voice." Very calm. Nowadays we use "*jo*" in various ways, but it is also calmness of our mind, inner calmness, but more positive, and some function is there. To do something very carefully, with calmness of your mind, or to do or say things precisely--not too much or too little, just enough--that is what we mean by "*jo*." So to enjoy the calmness means to do things in your surroundings with careful mind, precisely, and thoroughly, without error. You can do it when you enjoy the calmness of your mind.

So when you enjoy the calmness of your mind, that is zazen practice. In zazen practice you should enjoy the calmness of your mind. You will have pain, of course, but if you fix your mind to practice zazen, you will have the joy of becoming one with pain. To become one with it, you suffer pain. I don't mean with pain, but with pain. Do you

understand me” With pain. The joy of pain: You may say, “Oh no!,” but if you fix your mind to get married with pain, you will have the joy of marriage with pain. That is oneness of pain and you. And at that time you have no idea of pain, but rather pain is you. What is in your practice is just pain, no more you! Ahhhhhh! Just pain. That is calmness of your mind. When you feel that way, you have calmness of your mind in pain. People may say, “He is struggling with pain,” but “with” is extra. When you are one with pain, you are not struggling with pain. You are struggling pain, enjoying the pain, and pain is going on. Pain maybe very happy to go with you. That is complete calmness of your mind.

So even though you are in the city, it is possible to have calmness of your mind. But because you fight with the pain or voices from everywhere (?), you have no calmness of your mind. This is how you seclude yourself from the city. Physically and also mentally, you will be in the city, but if you fix your mind to exist in the city, when you do not try to escape from the city--”this is my zendo, I must practice zazen here,”--then everyone will listen to you, even the deities in heaven will listen to you. But as long as you are involved in the fight, “Oh, this is right, that is not right,” then even though you are in Zen Center, you are in the confusion of the city.

That is confused mind. But even in confusion you can have the calmness of your mind. Because you have calmness of your mind, you can see clearly, and you will find out how to resolve the problem. When you see it, the problem will resolve naturally in its way, because you are just one with it, and with your calmness of mind you are watching it. “Ohhhhh,” you may say, “Okay.” You don’t fight with it, but you see how it resolves, or how it resumes calmness where there is a problem.

What is necessary to do so is the big decision to practice zazen right here. Only when you have this confidence will you have absolute dignity. Not small dignity, your dignity or my dignity, but as the sutra says, “Even various deities in heaven will listen to you, admire you and respect you.” That is not just talk, it is not just a story. It happens in that way. It has been happening in that way in our Buddhist history.

This is a literal translation of Buddha’s last words. “This is why you should leave your own and other communities to live alone in solitude, pondering the extinction of the origin of suffering,”--why we suffer, how we suffer. “Those who rejoice in company have the pain, just as when many birds flock upon a great tree, it is in danger. Attachment to the world drowns one in the suffering of mankind, just as an old elephant drowning in the mud cannot get himself out. This is what is called ‘solitude.’ This is what is called ‘seclusion.’ But we should not take Buddha’s words literally. We should know exactly what he meant.

As our group becomes larger and larger, we tend to lose this point. When we were a small group, there was not much danger of this kind. But right now, I must confess, sometimes I myself am involved in the confusion. This point should always be remembered. Then if the danger becomes greater, I think our practice will become deeper and deeper. But if you escape--not seclude--but try to escape from the

confusion, the confusion will be bigger. You add the confusion of escaping from it. What you should do, whether Zen Center is bog or small, is the same thing. Even though we have many things to do, if you have real practice, it doesn't matter at all. But as we are a very lazy animal, if we don't have many problems, we don't have much spirit to practice zazen. That may be an advantage in our practice when we are a big group. But on the other hand, we have the disadvantage of losing ourselves in the problems we have. How not to be lost in our problems is our practice.

I feel I have a lot of things to see (say?) On this point, but the foundation of the spirit of our practice is here: to come to attain calmness of your mind, or to have the spirit to be here always. Wherever you are, the place you are is your zendo. Whatever you are doing, that is your practice. Even so, it maybe better for us to share our problems and to be under some limitation. It is better to practice our way, because for beginners it is easier.

To whatever degree you practice this practice, you will be worshiped by all the people and all the deities in heaven too. I am not talking about something mysterious. Why I say so is because I cannot say that we are the highest beings and that we human beings know every corner of the universe. So there maybe some deity who is watching us, and he may say, "Oh, you are great You are practicing real practice. I worship you." I am sure that they will also respect you. If you carefully watch Zen Center, that kind of thing happens everyday. But you ignore it, that's all. You shouldn't be caught by your own observation. So maybe even though you cannot trust a deity in heaven, you must have some room to have a deity in heaven. Even though you do not acknowledge it completely, you must have some room for everything to exist, and your practice should be extended to whatever it is, wherever something exists. That much confidence you must have in your everyday practice.

Thank you very much.

EZT – early SFZC transcript – 71-02-13
