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SUZUKI-ROSHI LECTURE

February 27, 1971. San Francisco.

The purpose of our practice, of course, is maybe to have full enlightenment. The reason we cannot have enlightenment is because of our delusion, or "muryo" in Japanese. We do not have a clear picture of this world, or we do not have the eyes to see clearly, to have a clear understanding of this world. That is called "muryo." Muryo is delusion. "Mu" is "no." "Ryo" is "clear." No clear light. Maybe you are a Buddhist or a student or someone who doesn't have clear eyes to see what the true way is, which way to go. So naturally you are wondering how to find some truth, and you want to have some clear map of which way to go. That is why you must have a teacher who gives you a map or some instruction on which way to go.

But even if you have a map and a teacher, there is still difficulty in your practice. As long as you press (?) your teacher, you don't have to worry about the way you take. But you are liable to see something else along the way, because you don't have to try to find out which way you should take. You are just following your teacher: When he goes fast, you go fast, and when he goes slow, you go slow. Maybe your teacher will be like your driver. You don't have to worry about driving, so you will see something outside of the car, and you will be easily caught by it. Or you will say, "Let's have a cup of tea, a cup of coffee! Let's stay here for two or three days." A teacher must accord with the request, and in that way you will waste your time. Instead of trying to ask him the way, you will stop at the coffee shop and have coffee--more than you need. That is a problem you may have. Even though in that way, eventually you will arrive at the goal or the city you want to go, sometimes you will lose your driver, because it takes too long a time to arrive at that city, and if he is very old, he will die.

In that case, in order to arrive at the city you want to go, naturally you should find another driver. You have some advantage because you already came so far. Someone who finds you will be very sympathetic, or you are very close to that city where you wish to go, so maybe he will take you to that city. You will find out that one advantage is that it may be easy for you to find someone who will drive you to the city.

Ahhh,...but you know, I think you will miss the driver. After he is no more, you will miss him a lot. And there you have another advantage. Because you miss him, you will try hard this time not to waste your time. If he dies, you must find another driver, so you will not disturb your driver anymore, saying, "Let's stop here!" And especially since you don't know how far it is to the city you want to go to, this time you naturally will not disturb the driver. That is another advantage.

But if you cannot find a driver, anyway ask him your way (?). Maybe someone who has big confidence in himself can make the trip on foot. "Yes, I am strong enough, I can walk

by myself." But at that time the difficulty will be that even though you actually arrive at the city, you don't know it, so you are still wondering about where to go. You think you will arrive eventually, at last. That is one problem.

Or another problem is that before you arrive at the real city, you may think, "This is the city where I wanted to go!" But that isn't the city, you know. I think many people have this problem. The problem is that to have the right teacher, to have a good driver is a trouble, and not to disturb your driver is very difficult. So to not waste your time with your teacher is one difficulty, to think you attained enlightenment before you attain it is another difficulty, and to not know you have enlightenment in your practice even though you have attained it is another difficulty for us. We have technical terms in Japanese for those difficulties.

So the best thing is to have a good map. What I mean by a good map is a clear understanding of our practice, even though to understand the teaching does not mean you have enlightenment. That is just the intellectual understanding, just a picture or map, but a map is necessary, and you should know what kind of spirit is necessary when you have a good driver. If you have some experience of driving a car, you will not disturb your driver so much, so some experience or some idea of driving a car will help.

This morning I want to talk about this point a little bit--the idea of driving your car. We say our way is way-seeking mind. Way-seeking mind is the understanding of how to drive. Way-seeking mind maybe very difficult for you, although it is not a complicated thing. It is quite simple, but actually, it maybe quite difficult to have it. The reason you make a trip is to go to some beautiful city or sight-seeing place. But the Way-seeking mind and your desire to make the trip are quite different things. To know this point is very important. If you know this point, you know which way to go.

When I was at Eihei-ji Monastery, Keitan Zenji was the Archbishop there. When he was young, he was making a trip, "Takuhatu." He was an inveterate smoker, and when he reached the temple path, he took a rest there, sitting on a stone, and took out one of his cigarettes or pipe. Seeing that he would arrive that evening, he took a cigarette, and it was so wonderful to have a puff. It was so wonderful that he gave up, he stopped smoking at that time. How about that! It must have been foggy, and through the mist he could see the town. And he thought it might not be so difficult to arrive at that city, so he must take his time a little bit more, and he was smoking. It was so nice that he stopped smoking. He knew what real desire is, what desire is exactly.

Here is another story: I think here in San Francisco we don't have such cold weather. At Tassajara maybe it is pretty cold, but in the winter time when you have a lot of snow, you will have frost bite, and before spring comes, it will become very itchy. I think there is nothing more agreeable than to scratch your itching frost bite. This is the time of the year when we scratch frost bite. So you will do it, and the more you do it, the more the frost bite becomes itchy, and you cannot stop it. You know that it is not such a healthy thing to scratch it, you know this is not a wholesome condition of your skin. Keitan Zenji knows this is not very good, that it is not something that he should desire so much or attach to so

much, like frost bite. No one tries to have more frost bite, but many people will be interested in that kind of joy or agreeable feeling (of scratching it).

Because of the driver's heart, you cannot make a good, quick trip to the goal, to that city you want to go to. You know we shouldn't stop so long, but you will stop there. If you ask the driver, "let's stop here," then the driver, knowing that this is just a waste of time, maybe annoyed. Or sometimes he maybe very sympathetic with you. "Oh, Okay," he may say, but he is not so happy. If you know you shouldn't scratch your frost bite so much, you should know what kind of desire will help you and how much desire you should have. Then naturally you will have control over it, as you don't scratch your frost bite so much. It seems to me that it is very difficult for you not to scratch your frost bite. This is a vital and very big problem for us. it is as though you think you are striving for attaining enlightenment, when actually you are sometimes scratching frost bite.

According to Buddha, that is to refrain from your desire. But it is not that desire is bad, and that you shouldn't have desire. It doesn't mean that. But to have right practice on your desire is the true practice. Desire itself will, if you let it go without control without control over it, create various karma, and you will suffer from them. So even though you think you are doing religious practice, unless you notice this point, you will, by religion, create another karma.

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Even though Keitan Zenji gave up smoking, he has desire as long as he is alive. But he knows how to treat his desires, that is all. Do you understand this point? I want you to understand this point very clearly, before you make your trip. Are you sure about his point? It is very foolish of you not to notice this point, very foolish, you know. I am not talking about something difficult. Maybe to give up smoking is very difficult. I know that. But to know this point may not be so difficult. I don't say you should give up, but if you know this point, you will know how to treat yourself, even though it is difficult.

So it is easy to follow our practice, but if yo don't know this point, you cannot follow whatever rules you have to help your practice. You don't try to follow them. Rules are provided not from the standpoint of the enlightened person, the enlightenment experience. But your understanding of rules is from the viewpoint of wide-open desires, "freedom," and so on. It doesn't make nay sense, does it? You just want to scratch your frost bite--that is your freedom. It doesn't make any sense. If your mother says, "Don't do that," you will fight with her. That is what most people are doing. But our rules are not like that. We call our rules "pure rules, enlightened rules."

To help your practice, we have rules, we have the map to go to the city, and you have a driver. If you always demand from your teacher to have more pleasure, it is only a trip. That is the main problem. But as we have desires, it is not necessary to be too strict with them. Maybe if you ask too many things, your mother will be angry with you. But what your mother wants to do is just

to make you come, that is all. (So if you do not look at anything, she will worry). She may say, "Don't look so much," but if you don't look at all, she may worry. So it is not necessary to be too strict, but you should know the point. You should have right attitude, and you should be cooperating with rather than disturbing your teacher. Okay? It is not because of me, but because I want to help you that I am saying this. It is very easy thing to understand and to do, and you can trust my word on this point. I don't know about when I say something very fancy, but with this I am very straight forward. I have had many experiences like this. You will enjoy your understanding of your desires, and naturally you will have good practice, and that good practice will help your everyday problems.

Here in this zendo, our way is the so-called Soto way, not the Rinzai way. Actually, our way is not how to get rid of confusion and problems from our life. The Soto way puts more emphasis on zazen. Zazen, zazen, zazen. What zazen means to you is to be yourself. How to be yourself is how to treat your painful legs, how to have good posture, how to make smooth, good breathing. When you take care of yourself, then you will have a mother-like mind. You will always say "Oh, don't eat too much," because you are always trying to take care of yourself, as in your zazen. When you become angry, you will say, "Don't be angry so much," but I may not help. You will treat your anger in this way. That is not how to treat yourself in your zazen. In zazen you cannot shout, "Don't do that!" So naturally, even though you are angry, you will be like this, without saying, "Don't be angry!" That is how you treat your anger. So naturally, eventually that anger will go. You will not be so indignant about any special thing. Actually you have no time to be angry. That is how to take care of yourself.

If you become boss of yourself, including your desire, you will be boss of everything. Your practice includes everything. The way you treat yourself is the way you treat your friend, the way you live in this society. You will not create any problems, and you will not even try to help others, but you are actually helping others in that way. It is very difficult for almost everyone to be like that. If you are like that, it will be a good example for others, and others will follow your example. They will not become like you, but they may feel very good to be around you.

So what you learn by the Soto way is how to treat yourself, and how you live in this world without creating karma for yourself and for others. Mostly, it seems to me you ignore the idea of karma. You don't want to see your karma, even though you are creating a lot of karma, one after another, one on top of another. You try to ignore it. But who will suffer from the karma? You yourself--no one else will suffer from it. And you cannot ignore the truth of cause and effect. If you do something, if you create some karma because you have no controlling practice over it, the result will come--you cannot escape from the law of karma. How you make your bad karma into good karma is also by the power of practice. When you create it, because of your good practice, bad karma will change its direction. Karma is not really good or bad. But when you work on karma, it will be good karma, and when you don't, the karma will create various karma on you, because you don't know how to treat yourself, how to treat your karma.

This point should be realized. Perhaps you don't want to hear this part of the teaching, but this is also true. This is not such a fancy Buddhist teaching. It is very, very clear. No one can ignore this. Your foolish effort will try to ignore it, but it will never work. And if you force it too much, you will invite destruction. It is worse than war. We are actually creating war through everyday activities. You talk about peace in some angry mood, when actually you are creating war with that angry mood. Urhhhhh, ughhhh! That is war! We should know. We should open our dharma eyes, and we should know the map once again, once more. And we should help together forever.

Thank you very much.

EZT – early SFZC transcript – 71-02-27
