

GENJŌ KŌAN NO. 4¹
Thursday, August 24, 1967
Z.M.C. *Sesshin* Lecture
Zen Mountain Center, Tassajara
Edited by Brian Fikes

NOT VERBATIM

(Again, the opening sentences were missed. According to Dick [Baker], they were something like: "This is the last lecture of *sesshin*. We have talked of form and emptiness, but have not understood it well."—B. F.)

... She was a part of the world, and whatever she said from the top of the mountain was in her mind. She felt an unusual warm feeling even for mountain range after mountain range, but at the same time, she felt very lonely. Something is missing in that understanding. What is it? What is it? Today, for my last lecture, I want to qualify this point.

Do you know the famous story of Gutei's one-finger Zen? I think everyone knows it. Gutei Osho lived in a small hut deep in the mountains. One day a nun called [Jissai] came to the hut. As soon as she arrived, she went around and around the altar with her hat on her head. Gutei Osho said, "Why don't you take off your hat?" She said, "If you can say something good to me, I will take off my hat." But he couldn't say anything, so he was very ashamed of himself. He left his *an*, his small temple, and started visiting famous Zen masters. First of all, he thought he must see Tenryu Osho. And before he said anything, Tenryu Osho held up one finger, like this, and Gutei was enlightened. You understand?

Form is emptiness, you know. When you see one leaf falling down from the tree, you will see autumn there. "Oh, autumn is here already!" you may say. So one leaf is not just one leaf; it means the whole autumn. So even one thing will cover everything, and here there is your world. Here you already understand the all-pervading power of your practice. Your practice covers everything.

Unfortunately, our understanding is so intellectual. When we say "covers everything", our understanding of this remains bound in terms of space, so the other side, time, is discontinuous. The idea of time which is discontinuous, or the momentary idea of time, is the same as the space-bound idea. "One point in wide space includes everything." Your understanding is liable to be like this. But actually, when we say "includes everything," it means the past and future too. So it includes

¹ This lecture does not appear to be on the *Genjō Kōan*. Suzuki-rōshi gave a series of three lectures on the *Genjō Kōan* at Tassajara in 1967. See SR-67-08-20-A *et seq.*

everything which exists in this moment, and which exists in this moment, and which will exist in the next moment, and which has existed in the past. Your understanding should reach this point. The all-pervading power and the incessant continuity of the power are both important. Training period now is over, it is true. But this is not the end of our practice. Incessantly, one after another, our practice will continue.

So, now we will go back to the story of Gutei. After that, whenever someone came, he held up one finger. That is all right, because he understood it, so they must have understood it -- I don't know. But one day when Master Gutei was not at the temple, someone came, so his disciple got up on the platform and received the question. "What is Buddhism?" the visiting monk asked. The disciple held up one finger. Unfortunately, his master heard about it, and he asked him, "What is Buddhism?" The disciple held up one finger. But the master cut off his finger! There is no more finger! The disciple cried out and almost went out, but the teacher called him back and held up one finger again. The boy was enlightened. Do you understand?

This may be the training period (holding up one finger); this may be sesshin right now, you see. After sesshin is cut off, what will come as the next training for us? You see? Cut off—but another one appears! Do you understand? One after another, this will appear.

So there is the continuity as well as the universality or all-pervading power of practice. We should have continuous practice, or else your practice is not perfect. Even if you attain enlightenment by one finger—form is emptiness—if that enlightenment is a momentary experience or enlightenment, it doesn't mean much. Something is still missing in your feeling. But when you realize that your practice will continue incessantly without any gap between one practice and the next, there there is true practice. If your enlightenment reaches this point, your understanding is perfect, and you don't have anything missing. Your mind will be full of joy in its true sense.

So even though you think you attain enlightenment, usually our enlightenment remains in some intellectual understanding of time or space and based on some self-centered idea. It is pretty hard to get beyond the limited intellectual understanding. This is why it is necessary to cut off the finger and to point out another finger. This fellow will go out once he's seen the one finger held up, as Tokusan did when Yutan blew out the light. I must tell you this story.

Tokusan visited Yutan and thought he had attained enlightenment under Yutan's instruction, so he wanted to go out. It was dark, so Yutan said, "It is too late for you to go. Why don't you stay?" But, you know, he was so grateful and so glad that he understood the

teaching because of his attaining enlightenment, so the master gave him a light. "Then take this with you." And Yutan blew out the light. Then Tokusan really truly understood, and he left. No one knows, as Dōgen-zenji said, if this enlightenment was perfect or not. If we see him, we will understand whether he attained enlightenment really and truly. But as far as the story goes, we are not so sure.

From Buddha's time to our age, human nature has been nearly the same. We live in the world of time and space, and our life does not go beyond this limit. To live in the world of time and space is like pushing a big snake into a small can. The snake will suffer in the small can. It does not know what is going on outside of the can. Because it is in the can, it is so dark he cannot see anything, but he will struggle in the small can. That is what we are doing. The more we struggle, the greater the suffering will be. That kind of practice will not work. Putting yourself in a small can and sitting day after day in a cross-legged position is worse than a waste of time. Do you understand? Sometimes our practice is something like this. We don't know how much our understanding is limited. That is why you have to study koans. Koans will open up your mind. If you understand your way of life more objectively, you will understand what you are doing.

I think right now you must have understood what "form is emptiness and emptiness is form" means in its true sense. Here you will understand Dogen Zenji's difficult statement: "Time passes from past to present, from present to future, and from future to present, and from present to past." If you really understand "form is emptiness" in its true sense, then in the time-bound world, you have this much freedom. Time goes from future to past, from present to past. This is an extraordinary statement. Form is emptiness, emptiness is form. In this present moment there is past and future. That future exists in the present moment means that future passes to the present. Right now your future is right here. This kind of experience continues forever from Buddha to us, from us to our descendants, from you to your friend. And we will have the perfect relationship between us, something more than relationship. This is how you develop your character in the whole world, past and future.

The founder of my temple was always studying Zuigan's koan. Zuigan always addressed himself, "Zuigan?" And he answered, "Yes!" "Zuigan?" "*Hai!*" The neighbors wondered what he was doing! "Zuigan!" At first they thought, "Zuigan isn't well." But he was always addressing himself, "Zuigan," and answering, "*Hai!*" Do you understand? Our practice should be like this, you know.

Of course, all of us have some small or big enlightenment, and in your zazen you may think about it again. But if you try to think about it, you will be lost, you will be lost. I know. I myself was lost, so I think

you will be lost too, because you are involved in an intellectual, cerebral way of thinking. And once you lose yourself, you start to torture yourself, you don't feel so good. That anxiety, that impatient, angry feeling will continue, and your practice will become worse and worse. That is what will happen to you.

But if someone calls your name, "Where is Kanzen?" all of a sudden, your practice will come back to you. You see? Emptiness is here, right here. Do you understand? So Zuigan had to call himself, because he would be lost if he didn't. Incessantly you should call your name. When you come back to yourself, there you include everything as a sole being in the time-bound and space-bound. And you will feel very good, you know.

This kind of practice, addressing someone in this way, is the kindest instruction to give. No one can be more kind to someone than this. Don't you think so? I do not write letters; that is very bad habit of mine. And I think sometime I really must write. Just to receive a letter from someone is enough to bring a person back to himself, directly to his home. This is true love. Incessantly we are changing, so it is necessary to call ourselves back incessantly. If you don't take care of yourself in this way, you will be lost.

After zazen we take a meal and recite the names of Buddha. That is calling ourselves back to home. Here there is the practice of continuity. The other kind of practice I have been talking about is the practice of discontinuity. Even if the practice is a momentary one, it has the great virtue of including everything. But if you practice our way incessantly, that will have the power to bring Shākyamuni Buddha right here. This is true, very true. It is more true than the time which passes from past to present. Here your practice is not space-bound or time-bound. You are beyond the idea of time and space, and you are independent in this world.

And yet everyone is your teacher. Shākyamuni Buddha or your friend or your family is within your enlightenment. You may say, "If I have a family, I cannot practice our way." That is because you are bound by the idea of annihilation. To cut off your consciousness does not mean to not think anything. Dogen says, "To cut off various ideas is to have various ideas." How about it? To cut off various ideas is to have various ideas within your practice. If you have a family, it may be more difficult to practice our way; that is true. But that does not mean it is impossible to practice our way. If you have enough conviction and effort, you can do it.

In this way we should make our effort. Today I act incessantly, incessantly. One enlightenment is not enough. One after another, incessant enlightenments are necessary. Moment after moment, you

must call Buddha's name or your name directly. There you have yourself.

I am so grateful for your joining our practice and listening to our lecture. Maezumi-sensei is leaving early tomorrow morning, so I hope he will speak on this occasion.

Originally transcribed by Brian Fikes. This transcript is a retyping of the existing City Center transcript. It is not verbatim. The City Center transcript was entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997. It was reformatted and notes were amended by Bill Redican 4/30/01 and 7/16/01.