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Sesshin Lecture No. 3
SINCERE PRACTICE AND WAY-SEEKING MIND
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To have—to have sincere practice means to have sincere concern with people. So our practice is actually based on our humanity. So Dōgen-zenji says to accomplish humanity is to raise—to hold up Buddhism and help people.

So what is the way to establish humanity? That is the way to establish humanity is *tao* or practice, he says. By practice we can establish humanity, and our practice is based on humanity, so human being practice true human nature is our zazen. And he says the way is not something which was established by Buddha or some particular patriarch.

We must have spirit to attribute various good things to others, and accept various evil or mistake as your own. That is the spirit. With this spirit, we should establish our human way. And how to establish our human way is how to practice zazen. So you may understand zazen practice is not some special practice for special person. And this is the only way to accomplish or to establish our human way in this actual world. If you want to seek for the way for human being—if you try to seek for the way for human being some other way, it is almost impossible.

And so Dōgen-zenji was very strict, you know, with our human way. That is why his way is called it *menmitsu no kafu*,¹ you know. He doesn't, you know, ignore even a drop of water, like a well—well-made rice paper. And—and he, you know, is always asking us, you know, "Your way is like this, and—do you—can you accept that kind of way as your own way?" [Laughs.] And he criticize, you know, our weakness and our darkness or carelessness in our everyday activity—treating things, treating your friend, receiving teaching from your teacher. And after all, what he will say is, "practice zazen." That is only way [laughs] to polish up your everyday life, and to do it without making so much effort. That is the only way.

And the Fifth—Fifth Patriarch Gunin-zenji,² referring to this point, he says, you know, "The way who—which was established—established by Buddha[']s time, it cannot be our way because time is different from our time, and people are different, and society is different from our time—society and people in our time." So the way we mean—*tao* we mean—is

¹ *menmitsu no kafu* (Jap.): "a very careful and considerate style." See also SR-70-05-27, Suzuki-rōshi's first lecture on the *Sandōkai*.

² Chinese: Daman Hongren or Ta-men Hung-jen; Japanese: Daiman Gunin or Daiman Kōnin. 601-674. Chan patriarch and teacher of Huineng.

not something established already by someone—some special person. The way is not something which was established already, but which could be found out according to the circumstances in—in each moment. That is the real way. How we, you know, find out our way is to practice zazen. From our practice, real way—realization of our true way, will reveal itself. You will naturally find out the real way. That is the real way. If so—if so, to practice zazen is to establish human way.

If we say "zazen practice," you may think this is some special, you know, practice, but it is—actually it is not so. Because you think zazen practice is some special way, you become—you goof off on [laughs]—on black cushion, making some excuse, you know: "I am something—I am doing something good. I am—I am inv- [partial word]—trying to find out something—some truth [laughs, laughter] on a black cushion." Or "I am following Buddha's way." Or you may say, as maybe you—you may not know what is zazen, but "Zazen is," you know, "the way which Buddha established, so if we follow his way [laughs], that is zazen." But according to Dōgen-zenji, that is not zazen at all.

If you understand zazen in that way—if you understand your zazen is—understand zazen is nothing, you know, but our human activity, the way everyone must do—if you understand in that way, you will not be involved in any idea of schools of Buddhism [laughs]—Rinzai Zen or Sōtō Zen [laughs], Buddhism or Christianity, you know. Because you don't have actual understanding of zazen, and your way of practice—your spirit of practice is not real, you know—is not—does not come—come from—from your innate—inner voice, because you ignore things you are doing in your everyday daily life, [you may say] this is—"Zazen is important [laughs], but those things are not so important, so if we practice zazen, even though [I] ignore my fault—two, three of my fault—it may be okay." [Laughs.] If you practice zazen with this—in this way, your zazen is not true zazen. That is heresy [laughs].

We—as you know, we respect transmission, you know. Transmission is—although we have nothing to transmit, you know, we have no [laughs, laughter]—nothing to—to transmit because what we should transmit is, you know, our human way [laughs]. So human way is something everyone has, you know. Everyone has same feeling. If we drop off various superficial understanding of things and superficial feeling, then—our feeling is same. Our inmost nature is the same. There is no Japanese feeling or American feeling. It is the same, exactly the same. If you see Japanese people, you know, you—you will have American feeling [laughs], but if you forget all about Japanese or American way, there—we have no special feeling. For an instance, you know, when you practice zazen there is no American [laughing] zazen or Japanese zazen. Zazen is the same. If we stop thinking, when we are free from our emotional activity, there is no two zazen. And only when we have, you know, both Japanese people and American people have this kind of

feeling, you know, which is not American or Japanese. Then we can, you know—we will have good relationship.

Once in a while, you know, you may want to be an American or a Japanese even [laughing]. Once in a while—not always. And you will feel to—to behave like Japanese, you will feel good. And I feel good when I say something like you say in slang someday [laughing]. I feel very good, but not always.

But the feeling you have when you behave like Japanese, and the feeling I have when I behave like American is the same [laughs]. No difference. So if we don't stick to something, there is no Japanese or American. There is no good or bad.

So that is why the Fifth Patriarch of Japan said because time is different, people is different, and society is different, there is—there cannot be no set-up rules for us. The rules should be found out in each moment, and how we find out is to practice zazen. From nothing—when we resume nothingness, we will find out our way according to the situation. To see various event is to see the way we act. To see people—to see someone is how to—how to be friendly with him, you know. There is no special way to become friendly with someone.

In this way, although true way was—was kept in its perfect understanding, and true practice was kept—has been kept from Buddha to us, but the true way always mixed up some secondary way: so-called-it *tao* or way. When we say "way," it cannot be true way already. When I say "way," you may think this way or that way, Japanese way or American way [laughs]. So it is—true way is something which you can substitute for something else. That is true way.

If I say so, you may think the way is only one [laughs], but approach—although approach is different, the way is one. But, you know, even though you say so [laughs]—I don't know, you know, whether you understand. That only one way. Even though if I say so, you know, way is—true way is one. But the approach is different.

But what I mean is not like that. Those who talk about non-sectarianism [laughs], you know—every religion has one goal. The top is the one. But the way to it will be different. So there is no way—there is no need to discriminate, because the conclusion is the same. So whichever way you take, you will reach the same point.

But when you say so—even though you say so, the point you mean is not the point we mean. Even though, you know, we put emphasis on practice of zazen, it does not mean we have some special point. We have, you know—we rather resume to our human nature, which is universal, without seeking for some point. So before we start zazen practice, or before we

[get] involved in various kind of religion, real, you know, way is there. So to forget all about religion, including Zen, is our way—and to find our way moment after moment, according to the circumstances, and to respect people, to respect things without ignoring anything.

And if you make mistake, you should be faithfully make repentance. Without doing so, you know—"everyone make mistake, so it—it is okay." If you say so, that is not your inner voice. That you say so already means, you know, you have, you know, some pain in your heart. "Everyone is—is doing so. It is okay." If it is okay, there is no need to say "okay." [Laughs.] It is not okay, so you say it is okay [laughs, laughter].

So whatever you do, if you think more, if you are, you know—if you start from nothingness, you will see many things going on in your, you know, mind and to which you should be regret—regretful. We should be more conscientious about what we are doing because [when?] we see it. Sometime we don't see it. When we are not practicing zazen, our mind is mixed up [with] something else, we don't see. This is, you know, why we practice zazen.

And reason we practice zazen is very strict. We don't feel so good, you know—very strict. But being encouraged by strictness of the human nature, we will continue our practice forever, as long as we have human nature. So human nature encourage our practice, and our practice will help our full expression of human nature. So, you know, helping with each other, encouraging with each other, our practice will go on and on. *[Sentence probably finished. Tape turned over.]*

... how our practice is going. And so dreaming of some attainment, aiming at some selfish goal to practice zazen is, you know, not at all our practice. It is far from our practice.

Buddhism was established by Buddha when he saw, you know, every creatures fighting with each other, killing with each other. That is why he started Buddhism. Our way is not the way to get out of this kind of problem, but to see actually what we are doing moment after moment, from which we cannot escape. You know, each moment we are doing this kind of things. That you eat something, already you are killing something. So you cannot escape from what you are doing actually. That is why we practice zazen. And by practice we can resume to—resume our fundamental being—so-called-it buddha-nature, where we should start our real activity. This is actually Buddha's teaching, and to— to have full realization of this experience is our practice.

So you may say our everyday life start from practice, and our practice will be encouraged by our everyday life. So everyday life and practice is—are really two side of one coin. That is why we say, you know, everyday life

is our *kōan*. *Kōan* in its usual sense—it is official document [laughs], you know—*kōan*—you know, public announcement is *kōan*. Public announcement—it is public announcement because you cannot change it [laughs]. That is *kōan*. But *kōan* in its true sense is something which appeared from our innate human nature. You cannot, you know, substitute for something else. Once it, you know, [is] issued you cannot change it [laughs]. Very strict. So with this strictness to yourself, we should practice zazen. This is the secret of solving all the problem—problems we have.

When Dōgen-zenji talked about our way, someone asked:

"You say you should be," you know, "strict with yourself, and you should not be concerned about what people may say about you, or whether it is good thing or bad thing to do something. But if you act in that way, there is big danger—there may be big danger for you. It may be better to follow some rules." [Laughs.]

But he said:

"It—it is very much so, but our way is not," you know, "so easy. [Laughs.] Our human way cannot be so easy."

Because our mind is very touchy and very subtle, we do not allow any mistake for us. So it is not—cannot be so easy. The only way for us is, if you make mistake, then you should be, you know, regretful and you should make confession of it and pray for [to] Buddha. Without doing this, you—if you say, "I am following Buddha's way," you are fooling yourself.

If you get many offerings, you know, following Buddha's way [laughs], you are, you know—that is not Buddhist way. That is a kind of heresy, you know. To receive something which you should not receive, that is heresy, he said. When you are, you know, push[ed] into such a strict, you know, small corner of our everyday life, you will find out you have to sit. This is, you know, how you arise the way-seeking mind, and this is what he means by sincere practice.

Thank you very much.

Sources: City Center transcript entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997.
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