

Shobogenzo

Thursday, August 18, 1966

SESSHIN LECTURE: Thursday, 1:00 pm, Lecture B

Sokoji, San Francisco

Before translating original text,¹ I want to make sure of our traditional way of teaching or our understanding of practice. As being goes on and on from formed to forming,² our teaching develops on and on. It is new expression of old teaching in one way, but on the other hand it is returning to the old teaching. Actually it is the same thing. From Buddha to us and from us to Buddha, it is the same thing. It is the same understanding, but when we bow to him it means teaching comes from Buddha. But the teaching coming from Buddha to us means actually our new experience of Buddha returns to Buddha. So it is the same thing, but the understanding is different. When we say something about our teaching, there is no other way to say teaching comes from Buddha, or our teaching should go back to Buddha. That is our effort of developing Buddhism. We should not be just confined to the realm of Buddha's teaching. Always new expression is necessary, but new experience is actually going back to Buddha.

You say, in the ordinary sense, Buddha was born 3,000 years ago, but that is not so. Buddha is here when you believe in Buddha. Even though you say that you experience, that is Buddha's experience. There is no two buddhas. Buddha is always one. As I said last night, there is no difference between future and past. Past is future, future is past. So in this sense what we transmitted from Buddha to us is one—this one buddha. The understanding may be different, and if you put it in words there may be two ways. But actually it is two different interpretations of one transmitted experience.

This is the same as our life. Our life is always extending from old to new life. But it is, at the same time, the unfolding of our true nature. Bodhidharma said, *ikke-kaigoyō*:³ [laughs] *Ikke* means one flower, or one bud—"one bud blooms in five petals." It is an expression of Buddhism: "Each one of the buds blooms in five petals." And naturally results in one beautiful thing. "One bud opens in five petals" means a new expression of Buddha's way. Resulting in one thing — that is to believe in oneness. You say Buddhism results in beautiful fruit here, but actually it means it is the same thing. You say, "This is the result," but the result is not just the result. Result has another way of expression. If you take a more materialistic way of expression, it is a flower which opens. If you take a more spiritual way of expression, it is the result. You work for a result in something. That seed is Buddha, actually. Your effort will result in Buddha himself. But on the other hand, that is also a new expression of Buddha's truth. New expression is at the same time but will result because of your effort. So this is two different ways of putting one experience. Usually there is a lot of misunderstanding in transmitting our way. When we say Buddha, then a sentient being exists. When we say one, many simultaneously exist. You know, one and many is [laughs] the same thing. If there is no many, there is no one. Do you understand? This is simultaneous existence. When one exists, simultaneously many exist. If Buddha exists, sentient beings exist. If there is a true way of Buddha, its expression

follows. In this way, Buddhism always develops. If there is Buddha, there is someone who worships Buddha. If there is plus electricity, simultaneously minus electricity will arise. There is no single minus electricity. Where there is plus there is minus. In this way, as a unit, plus and minus always goes. In this way, things develop.

So Buddha and sentient being, student and teacher, man and woman always exist as a unit. But it does not mean man and woman are different. It exists always as a unit, and how it exists is through, we say, "interdependency." In Zen we say *ego-enden*.⁴ *Ego-enden* means-- you know [laughs], its relationship is like that of ivy and vine⁵ [laughs]. Very difficult to figure out, but it exists as one unit. How it exists is very difficult. Ivy and vine over ivy vine. The relationship is so close. Actually it is one unit.

So in this way everything exists. Buddhism exists in this way too. This is how Buddhism is transmitted from Buddha to us. So it does not necessarily mean to common people that sentient people attain buddhahood. When a sentient being is a sentient being through and through, he is Buddha himself because the relationship is so close. Actually it is one. This is how we have transmitted our way.

To give the perfect translation to the Shobogenzo is almost impossible. I could not make enough preparation to translate it, but anyway I want to read it. I want to make some rendering to this original text:

[Dogen's Shobogenzo "Sokushin-zebutsu"]

From Buddha to Buddha, from patriarch to patriarch, the transmitted way without exception is "mind itself is Buddha." But in India it is not possible to find the statement "mind itself is Buddha." This wording originated in China.⁶ But scholars could not understand it the right way. So they could not transmit the way properly. Because they could not transmit the way properly, their understanding fell into heresy. Hearing the statement "mind itself is Buddha," people say the mind we have—the mind which has consciousness and function of consciousness and memory or decision -- is the mind. Moreover, the mind is the mind which does not arise, which is not bodhisattva-mind "Is Buddha's mind," they say. "Why is it?" Because they did not have the right teacher. By heretical understanding, I mean the Indian heretics named Senni.⁷ Their view of life was that the true mind is within our body. How it exists within our mind is obvious, easily known. The mind we have is aware of suffering and pleasure, cold and warm, and pain or itch. And that mind works over everything without any restriction, and pervades everywhere. Things may change and surroundings may change, but this mind does not change forever. This mind is all over, there is no difference in ordinary mind, and there is no difference in the mind whether the mind exists in a holy man or a fool. You may say this mind makes some delusion, but, even so, once this mind resumes its true function, the wisdom of this mind will reveal itself. So after things reduce to nothing and the environment changes, true mind will become clear. True mind is always clear and constant. Even though our body is finished, our mind does not finish. It is the same as when a house is burned and people get out of the house. This divine, holy mind a sage called true nature, and they call it Buddha or enlightenment. This mind is within ourselves and within others. This mind is in the fool or the enlightened. Every existence

in the universe or our surroundings is not⁸ permanent. This mind does not follow mortal being. This mind is quite different from things outside. For many kalpas of time, this mind is always constant. When everything is observed by this mind, everything becomes true. Because of this mind, everything arising in our consciousness is true. But it is not always true without our true, divine mind. This mind is called "holy mind," "holy wisdom." This mind is called "true self." This mind is called "original self." This mind is called "ontological existence." When we have this kind of understanding, we say we resume our true nature. This kind of mind is called "a great sage." There is no other way to get out of birth and death. This is the way to enter our true nature of the ocean. This is the only truth we know. When this true nature reveals itself, we say we have three worlds,⁹ six realms of being.¹⁰ This is the heretical understanding of Senni. [end of Shobogenzo passage]

Why this understanding is not right is that they think materialistically. They just have a naïve, miserable, [laughs] materialistic understanding. It is rather difficult for us, you know, to get out of this kind of understanding. Even though you talk about something spiritual [laughs], you will put spiritual discussion into the realm of materialistic discussion. You are not actually talking about something spiritual at all. You are talking about material. You treat spiritual being as a kind of material. You think holy mind is something which exists —substantial existence. But holy mind is not like a storm or sea [laughs]. If I say "holy mind," you will ask me, "Where is it? [Laughs.] What is the shape of the holy mind? What does it look like? How do you find it?" [Laughs.] But you cannot find it, because it is not material. Intellectually you cannot discuss it. The only way is to catch it in the realm of duality [laughs].

Dualistic understanding [laughs] is not good, you know, but [it is] better than materialistic understanding. When you say, "I am no good, I haven't attained enlightenment," that is not so good understanding, but it may be better than materialistic understanding of yourself—much better.

But when you realize that everything exists in a dualistic way, when you become discriminative—"this or that, good or bad, which is—which way should I take?"—even though you take bad ways, it means you are taking good ways. Good and bad always follow. It exists as a unit. So when you choose something good, something bad will follow [laughing, laughter]. So it may be better to choose something bad, because you are ready. And when you find something good in something bad, you will be delighted. That's much better.

In Shushogi it says, *shobo-akirano*: "To have clear understanding of birth and death is how to understand Buddhism."¹¹ When you have clear understanding of birth and death, you are not discriminative about birth and death. You don't mind. If birth comes [laughing] or if death comes, it is the same thing. No difference at all. Because it exists in its true sense as a pair, you know. So if people want to sell something bad [laughs], they sell it with something good. If you buy this one [laughs], you will have this one for free. [laughing]. But actually the price is for the good one and the bad one. You are actually buying something good with something bad. The same thing will happen to us. Even though you prefer something good to something bad,

actually what you will get is good and bad because it is a pair. You cannot buy one shoe [laughs]. You have to buy a pair of shoes [laughs, laughter].

We don't mind man and woman, you know. Which is man and which is woman? Sometime man [laughs] is disguised in woman. That [1-2 words] good idea [1 word] because it is [1 word]. This is [2 words] [laughs]. In Japan, you know, a gentleman walks first [laugh], here lady first. It doesn't matter. Lady first or gentleman first doesn't matter at all. There is no need to have such a strict rule about which is first. When you serve you help ladies. The side which feels better is the side which helped [laughs], and the side which was helped does not feel so good. So it doesn't matter which helps which. This is the kind of freedom we have when we understand how we exist. This is how our way was transmitted, while ordinary people just adore having something holy instead of something common. This is the difference between Buddhism and usual religion.

Next Dogen refers to the old story:

National Teacher Echū¹² in the Tang dynasty was questioned by a priest who came from southern countries.

Then the master said: "I heard of many Zen masters in southern countries."

And the priest said, "Yes, there are many teachers in our country."

The teacher asked, "How do they instruct students?"

The priest said:

"They teach the directly transmitted way, which is called "the mind itself is buddha." Buddha means 'enlightened one.' [Writes on chalkboard.] The enlightened mind has all the consciousness and all the enlightened function. This mind makes the eyeball rise and the eyes blink. This mind acts quite free. And this mind pervades all through the body. So if you love your head, you know you have your head. If you feel your legs, you know you have your legs. So this mind is called 'all-pervading mind wisdom.' But apart from this mind, there is no buddha. There is no other buddha."

Tape operator: It looks like the second portion of this tape has been lost, except for the very end. But if not, the middle sentence lost when switching to this tape is: "This mind does not arise or perish from the endless beginning." And then the lecture begins. Hopefully.

Suzuki-roshi continues:¹³

If you want to study Buddhism, you should enter the room. You should not stay at the edge of the teaching. Even though you enter our room, you will not have any restriction. You are quite free. But you should enter our teaching. It means don't try to understand it just intellectually or by means of experience only. Experience, of course, is important, but the more important thing

is confidence to believe in yourself. And you should be faithful to what you feel and what you think. You should not fool yourself. It is quite all right to say, "I cannot agree with you or cannot accept the teaching." That is all right. It is how we make our understanding deeper and deeper.

So Dogen-zenji says, "For a while we are teacher and disciple, but we are all friends forever." And in this way we can develop our way. So it does not mean just Buddhism. It should be our way.

We have practiced sesshin for four days already [laughs], but I don't know what you gain [laughs, laughter]. And that is quite all right, because you are already in the room here. You cannot get out of it [laughs, laughter]. Don't say, "I did not get anything here, so I must [laughs] get out of it." Wherever you go you will have the same [laughs] trouble [laughter]. Wherever you go, you will not get anything [laughs] because you are already in the room [laughs]. The same thing will happen to us always. It does not mean that I detain you in this room [laughs]. Whatever decision you make, that is quite all right. But we should be faithful [laughs] to ourselves. And if your understanding is not deep enough, I will say that it is not deep enough, not wrong. There is no wrong view of life. Not wrong, but maybe one-sided or not deep enough. So we should make our understanding deeper and deeper and deeper. That is how we practice zazen—Buddhism.

When you cannot swim [laughing], if you were thrown into a deep river, you will be scared. And it is quite natural for you to try to get out of it, but unfortunately or fortunately it is impossible to get out of it. How to be rescued is to try to reach the bottom of the water. Then you will float [laughter]. If you try to get out of it, you will be drowned [laughter]. That is how we study Buddhism.

Thank you very much.

¹ Dogen's Shobogenzo "Sokushin-zebutsu."

² See also SR-66-08-15.

³ Literally, "One flower opens into five petals." A line from a verse attributed to Bodhidharma, one traditional interpretation being that Zen would evolve into five lineages. Bodhidharma also interpreted it as a manifestation of one's buddha-nature.

⁴ ego-enden (Jap.): free mental penetration of two conceptions; a mind of non-attachment. Ego by itself means "mutual interpenetration" or "mutual interdependence" (as in the Sandokai—see especially SR-70-06-03).

⁵ Suzuki-rōshi pronounced it "vein," but he was probably referring to a vine, as in Dogen's Shobogenzo "Katto": "Branches or fruit are both dependent on and independent of vines and ivy" (revised from Yuho Yokoi, *The Japanese-English Zen Buddhist Dictionary*, p. 108).

⁶ For example: Case 30 of Wu-men-kuan (Jap. Mumonkan, Eng. Gateless Gate) koan collection: "One day a monk asked the great teacher Mazu: 'What is Buddha's mind?' Mazu said, 'Mind itself is Buddha.'"

⁷ Senni-gedo (Jap.): Senni (Senika) + gedo (non-Buddhist). An Indian non-Buddhist school led by Senika in Shākyamuni Buddha's time. It held that the body is perishable, but one's divine nature (atman) was imperishable.

⁸ Suzuki-roshi probably did not intend to say "not." Another translation has: "It includes both the subject and the object, and it permeates both delusion and enlightenment" (Nishijima and Cross, 1994, Vol. 1, p. 50).

⁹ The three worlds: the worlds of volition, matter, and the immaterial.

¹⁰ The six miserable states: the states of beings in hell, hungry ghosts, animals, angry demons, human beings, and gods.

¹¹ This is essentially the first line of Shushogi.

¹² Nanyang Huizhong (Nan'yo Echū): 675–775. Disciple of the Sixth Chinese Patriarch, Dajian Huineng (Daikan Enō). He taught three Tang emperors: Tang Xuan Zong, Tang Zu Zong, and Tang Dai Zong, the latter of whom gave him the title "National Master" or "National Teacher" (Jap. Kokushi).

¹³ The tape resumed, after the comment by the operator, with the following lecture fragment. It is presumed to be the end of lecture SR-66-08-18-B for the following reasons: (a) it directly followed the operator's comments; (b) it ends with "Thank you very much," and (c) Suzuki-rōshi states in the fragment that it is the fourth day of the sesshin, which would mean Thursday was the day the fragment of the lecture was given.

Source: Original City Center tape. Verbatim transcript by Adam Tinkham and Bill Redican (8/2/01). Lightly edited for readability by Wendy Pirsig, Peter Ford and David Chadwick (8/2020).