

68-11-11

SHOSAN CEREMONY

November 11, 1968.

If you want to know what Buddha Nature is...which is not possible to know what it is...but if you want to realize it, you should wait until it comes to you. If you know...if you want to talk about which is not possible to talk about present some words to me.

Claude Dalenberg:

Incessant change and evanescence everywhere-life is so short. What is the most important thing to do?

Roshi: To continue everyday practice forever...good point.

Ed Brown:

Thank you very much.

Roshi: Thank you very much.

Jim Norton:

If I look at the moon on one hand I may think this is the moon and on the other hand I may think this is my own eye. Is this Nirmanakaya and Sambogakaya?

Roshi: Yes, it is. The moon ...you see by your eyes and your eyes is the; are not different actually. So, this is Nirmanakaya Buddha.

Jeff Williamson:

Recently in my zazen I have been putting forth every bit of effort that I can find. And before too long that I have been sitting there I think that I should slow down that I am trying too hard to have good practice. And then I think, no, I am not trying too hard, I am putting forth my very best effort. And, I really do not understand what you mean when you say put forth your very best effort but be careful that you do not try too hard. I do not know where to draw the line. I do not know when I am doing one thing and when I am doing the other. Could you please say something that would help me now.

Roshi: Try your best effort, means not to lose your way. Always keep up with your practice, that is what I mean. Of course zazen practice is difficult because we should reject the too extreme. While you are practicing it while you are keep up with your practice everyday practice, you will find out how to reject the too extreme. So, when you become frustrated when you have problems, when you are discouraged at that time you

should try your best effort to resume your own practice...that is what I mean.

Jeff Sherman:

Very often I feel your compassion...I don't understand emptiness. I was wondering where compassion is in emptiness, or...

Roshi: Compassion will be directed, will be on always some phenomenal world. ...which cause attachment. When originally everything is empty that is how compassion arises. So, compassion and somethingness and emptiness is the same, has same quality. When we understand emptiness we become compassionate on something which exists in time of material or spiritual. So, emptiness is not different from compassion. It is source of compassion.

Jeff Sherman:

I am not sure I understand but I don't know what to say about it, my not understanding. I can't ask another question.

Roshi: Where there is something there should be compassion. Compassion should be always on every being...like everything arises from emptiness.

Doug Bradle:

There you sit resolute in your serenity. Here am I miserable and quivering in my confusion. As I tried to think a question for you I just became hopelessly tangled up in my own thoughts. And then, just now I thought, well, you probably had to go through this same thing at one time too. And you probably had to try to think of a question for your master. And, what did you do? Did you become hopelessly confused like me or did you find some way out?

Roshi: As you have someone to ask about...you...you don't know...you say you don't know but you do. If there is no one to ask you---ask about the confusion...then what is the confusion? The confusion itself is already the meaning of life, your own experience which you have...get through. So, to ask question, to present question is a kind of communication-mutual understanding. It means that, to extend your experience. So, you should accept the confusion as your experience of life. To be in confusion means to be in, to be amid the boundless mercy of the Buddha. You should accept it. In that way, we should lead our life in this way.

Chris Flynn:

Some Zen masters both contemporary and historical have put a great deal of emphasis on reaching kensho. They put emphasis on method and posture, but here at Tassajara and Sokoji we don't do that.

Roshi: Then what will you do?...will you do, here? Here,...it is necessary to have confidence to keep up with everyday activity which is going here. If it is difficult to do everything perfectly then choose something like zazen practice or like sutra reciting, like sutra study. Choose one or two out of the many activities and try to do it satisfactorily.

Rick Norton:

How may this *Lotus Sutra* be used to gain salvation?

Roshi: We don't know how it may...Still the salvation is going. It may go forever.

***Elias: There are many questions about how hard and how long. The stream side Tassajara has been flowing a long time. I wish to ask it how long and how hard must it flow. Listen.

Roshi: If you notice that point that is Buddha's Buddha's ??

Arnold Silberman: (silence)

David Chadwick:

I am so grateful to you and Tassajara Zen Center that I'd like to study Zen. What should I do first?

Roshi: You should do something in right time in the right way. Try to keep up with the practice.

Pat Herreshoff:

I do not understand the meaning of my life. We have been given to understand that meaning is eternal. Is it possible for me to relate eternal meaning in this transient body?

Roshi: Yes, it is possible and eternal meaning is actually in your everyday life. So, there is no need to figure out what is the meaning of life...especially for you. I say what you are doing is very good but don't try to figure out the meaning of your life. To me your life is meaningful but I don't know right now...it is meaningful for you but whether whatever...however your life is meaningful, very meaningful, and that you are struggling with it is also meaningful. Don't lose another aspect of your life, don't stick to one aspect only.

Pat Lang:

Could you explain what it means to be a serious Zen student?

Roshi: Serious?...excuse me,...serious Zen?

Pat: Serious student of Zen Buddhism...

Roshi: Serious student of Zen Buddhism. Don't try to be too serious...(laughter). Just keep up with the practice. Don't try to get up earlier than other people...(laughter)...stay in bed...OK?

Pat: OK.

Emmy Buckley:

I carry a very weak light to help me find my way through the darkness that I feel breathing all around me. I go very slowly. And, I am very deeply grateful for your patience and understanding you have in helping me.

Roshi: Go slowly...as much as you can.

Francis Thompson:

Your kindness touches my heart.

Roshi: Maybe because I am not so kind...(laughter)

Evelyn Pepper:

You say that we are all one. Then why are we--is everything so different?

Roshi: Because it is different: they are all one (Roshi chuckles)...do you understand? If it is the same it is not even one. We say one because they are different. If it is, you know, same from the beginning there is no need to say one. OK?

Angie Runyon:

I too want to know the meaning of human existence.

Roshi: Human existence?...yeah...human existence. The characteristic of human existence is duality. We are dualistic beings. That is our characteristic of life. So, if you attach to one side of our life we will lose, we will be completely lost, because we have double nature. So our understanding of life should be double structure.

Sally Block:

You have told us that we are not alike at all and also you tell us that we should develop consideration for each other. How can we develop a feeling for what goes on in

other people's minds for how they think, how they react, why they react and how they live so that we can develop consideration for them?

Roshi: To be able to...understand reality from various angles even though it is not possible to understand things from various angles we should reserve always some understanding for someone else and try to understand...others feelings, others' understanding. Others' understanding may not always be right, sometimes wrong. But without being caught by the idea of right or wrong we should try to understand something which is something wrong as well as something which is right. This is ...if you try to do it, this is very difficult. But the only way is to practice zazen. To be concentrated on your zazen practice, not...the way you practice zazen and the way you do something in your everyday life is not the same. Your everyday life will be good when your practice is good because your everyday life will be supported by your power of practice. So, best way for us is to be concentrated on our zazen practice. This is anyway the most important point. Something everyday practice will be taken care of if your everyday life is concentrated on your zazen practice.

Liz Wolf:

I have many questions and I can't choose between them and so I just want to say that you are the only faith that is here for me...and I want to thank you.

Roshi: But...choose something and be concentrated on something you have chosen. Choose some problem and try to be concentrated on that problem...on the problem you have chosen.

Liz: What if it seems insurmountable?

Roshi: Choose something easier. (Laughter)

Mary Quagliata:

I always forget what I am going to say at these ceremonies because it is so formal, but I hope you have a good day to day and that we can practice together in a group.

Roshi:...

Harriet Hiestand:

You told us once that we are each our own teachers and so every question I thought of for you I could answer. But, I felt that I should ask them anyway. How can I trust my own answers?

Roshi: Your own answers? Maybe you cannot completely trust any answers whether it is your answer or my answer--you cannot trust it completely. But, when you ask me a question it is a kind of communication. To share the problem is the point of asking

question.

Harriet: But I get very frustrated because you never answer. You just substitute words and there is never an answer.

Roshi: To understand in that way is better not to rely on the answer so much. But...to present some question, that is enough.

Katherine Thanas:

Who are you?

Roshi: Good question...To whom are you asking. (laughter)

Katherine: To all of you.

Roshi: All of me? All of me back. All of...Are you really understand all of me? All of me what you see what you do not see.

Katherine: I don't know that I understand all. I feel there is much there.

Roshi: I am here. But before I am here, what exists here...something you don't know existed. I am someone who exists here who is speaking something. And I am also someone who does not appear in this way. Before I say something-before I exist here something is here with all being...and I am both someone who has form and color, someone who has no form and no color. Thank you. And you are speaking to someone who has body and mind.

Dan Welch:

May we understand our true home by the use of these words in the ceremony.

Roshi: I couldn't follow it.

Dan: I hope that we all come to understand our true home by the use of these words in the ceremony.

Roshi: I hope so.

Niels Holm:

Will you please tell me why I judge myself and others as good and bad student.

Roshi: I couldn't follow it.

Niels: Please tell me why I judge myself and others as good and bad student.

Roshi: Judge...discriminate, you mean?

Niels: Yes.

Roshi: You are a good student. There is no need to compare you to someone else. You have your own good quality which no one has...so you are independent. And when you become you yourself...you will be with all your friends. OK?

Allan Rappaport:

I am very afraid a lot of the time. I am afraid now. Can you help me?

Roshi: Afraid of what? Something...afraid of something which you cannot figure out?

Allan: I think I am afraid of being hurt and lost.

Roshi: Lost? No, that is not possible. You are here, you know. And there is no need to be afraid of...because anyway you are changing. If you are afraid of being always changing...maybe that is why you are afraid. But if you are changing always why don't you try to change for better? As long as you are making that effort there is no need to be afraid of anything. Even a little bit. Even little bit change for the better will work.

Jeff Broadbent:

Why do I feel hatred, repugnance and disgust?

Roshi: Maybe because you want to solve everything, every problem in limited sense and by limited way...that is why. You should wait. You should do it one by one then there is no hatred or no bad feeling.

Jeff: How do you mean one by one?

Roshi: Just to do something in time. To keep up with other's practice that is the main point. And don't discriminate your work too much within your limited time and material or space. You should do your best. Whether it is good or bad-no one knows-whether it is good or bad.

E.L. Hazelwood:

I have a question but I can't see it and so I can't grasp it so I don't know what it is so- I don't know how to ask it.

Roshi: The basic problem is the same for everyone...anyway as long as you are here

don't be too much concerned about yourself or what you do or what others do--just observe Tassajara as one body, as one person who has every parts of body: hands, legs, head, ears, eyes...and let it work whether it _____not much respect. If you try to practice our way-everyday practice our way. With this idea then there is salvation for each one of us.

Dan Chesluk:

Why have you told us this morning to concentrate on one activity?

Roshi: What I mean is not so complicated thing, you know. To do...try to get up before others, try not to eat too much...that kind of thing, anything which you think you want to try.

Dan: I thought you meant that for a long period of time we should concentrate on one thing.

Roshi: Yeah, that is something which you should do always for long period of time.

Dan: Concentrate on one thing? Pick one thing?

Roshi: Yeah, that is very good practice.

Dan: Because for myself I tend not to do that.

Roshi: Yeah, maybe so...So stick to one practice forever. That is very good.

Jack Weller: I am troubled by your saying that you don't trust us.

Roshi: I want to encourage you to stick to something not in time of good or bad but anyway. Like water stick to low of place. That kind of...without that kind of spirit we cannot trust anyone until we can see that kind of practice in some other person.

Jack: Then we can trust you. So we can trust you (Roshi laughs). But you cannot trust us.

Roshi: yeah, maybe. I try always to stick to something. Not because this is good or bad whether it is good or bad. To stick to one thing...when you stick to one thing only it maybe sometime understood as something good. Sometime it maybe understood as something which is bad. But whether it is good or bad it is out of question. If it is helpful to me and for others we should stick to one practice.

Allan Winter:

How can we make our marriage with Buddha more real?

Roshi: Marriage? more real. That is a good question. Marriage is not so real. (laughter)

Allan: I agree with you.

Roshi: So, if you want to find real marriage you should polish yourself and you should try to relate yourself to someone else whether your friend is man or woman. Your wife should be your lover...on one hand and should be someone who is nothing to do with you...someone who is quite independent from you. That is your wife. Wife is some human being which you don't know, which you can--some usual person which is nothing to do with you. And at the same time she will be your friend, or your best friend, and someone who you love. your wife has two sides--ordinary, just ordinary person and someone who you love. OK?

Stan White:

The only words I have this morning are not words...

Roshi: Yeah...we are discussing something which is not possible to discuss by words--so how actual words should go--this is how actual words should go. By words we should communicate something which is not possible to put...to limit by our words.

Craig Boyan:

Who is practicing harder now, me or the clock?

Roshi: Which? Both. When you practice hard, clock practicing hard. (laughter) When clock (When you are not practicing, clock is not practicing) I think so.

Bill Shurtleff:

The sound of the water in the stream seems to wash away all of the questions that I have. Many questions still come, but they seem to flow away. Trying to hold a question and to give it a form keeps me from hearing your words this morning and from hearing the sound of the stream. It feels strange for me to be without a question and so I just like to thank you for your wisdom, your kindness in being here with us.

Roshi: People take, listen and talk...in this way everything is going, like electric lamp the current is always going back and forth. It looks like very certain but actually it is not as we see it. So, the moment we appear, we vanish. We still practice always; that is our life. That is how everything exists and that is how Samboghakaya Buddha exists. So, when we understand our life in that way there is no...

Tim Buckley: (silence)

Roshi: (silence)

Gutei the Emperor of _____ asked Bodhidharma what is the first principle Buddha said, "Who is it in front of you?" Buddha said, "There is no holy person or common person." And the Emperor said, "Who are you in front of me?" Bodhidharma said, "I don't know." Bodhidharma in his answer appears to be someone who is just sitting without thinking, without doing anything, being with everything--without form, without color. He lived by himself in that way for the Emperor. But Emperor wanted to know someone who is wise, who is powerful, who is learned, who is very helpful. So, this question and answer was not so successful...We should understand ourselves in two ways. As some person and as someone which has no name or no body or no mind. To understand ourselves in this way is the _____ from myself. And true understanding of ourselves when we say 'things as it is', means that to understand ourselves from viewpoint of being and non-being. That is how we understand ourselves. That is how we should exist as a human being in this world or else we will be lost. Right now most people lead their life as someone who is know to each other but we lose the other point. That is why this world is so busy and noisy.

When we understand our world in this way with calmness of our mind, we will have compassionate mind for the people who is just involved in one sided view. Our practice should be concentrated on this point. By doing trivial, near-at-hand practice.

Thank you very much.

EZT – early SFZC transcript – 68-11-11
