

69-12-02

WINTER SESSHIN #4

PRACTICE SHOULD NOT BE PERFECT SO DESCENDANTS HAVE SOMETHING TO DO

December 2, 1969

To accomplish something is difficult. And, you know, the difficulty you have moment after moment, which you have to work on, will continue forever (laughter). I thought if I say so, if I say so I thought you know, you may laugh (laughter). And you are, you know, entrapped. We say...we have saying: to attain enlightenment may not be so difficult, but to continue our practice is difficult. So, after all, you know, why we practice zazen is to continue our practice. Or else, I think, our practice doesn't make much sense. We say, we have to live on each moment and we have to make our best in each moment, and moment after moment if, you know, our practice continues, with pain, with difficulties, it doesn't make much sense. Even thought you have wonderful practice moment after moment what will become of it, what is the purpose of life then? The purpose of life is not, actually, to accomplish something, but to, continue our Buddha way. So, to continue our Buddha way forever is to accomplish our way. To accomplish does not mean to reach some stage where we don't need to work anymore. So the most important point and the most difficult thing is to continue our way and to have good successor for us who may succeed, you know, our way. That is the meaning of the transmission. Transmission...we say transmission, but there is nothing to transmit. But, if we say there is something, that is the spirit of practice, to find someone who may continue our way. You know, my teacher, when he mended one of the buildings, he didn't mend the main building, but he just mended kitchen and zendo, and he...at that time he said: "If I try I can do it, but I must leave something for my disciples to do." (Roshi laughs) I couldn't understand what he meant exactly. It...the purpose of mending building to building something is not just to have some facility for us. The most important thing is to continue that kind of practice and to have successor who may take our responsibility, who may share our responsibility. The point is, you know, somewhere where you don't expect. If you understand this point you will understand what kind of life you should have and what kind of rules you have to observe. To have rules is not just for yourself but for your friends and for your disciples who may succeed our spirit. You know, as a Bodhisattva it is a pleasure to have something to work on, to have...We Bodhisattvas should work on difficulties, and if there is...so if you are very kind to your followers, successors, you should leave something for themselves, some difficulties...for your descendants, and then as a Bodhisattva, he may be very glad to have something to work on. So, not only, you know, your lifetime, but also, forever, for our descendants we should work on the difficulties. Do you know Bodhisattva's four vow? I explained many times, I think: If desires are inexhaustible, why we should...it doesn't make sense to have a vow to get rid of...it doesn't make sense, you know, desires which should work on (Roshi laughs). We understand in that way. You had, you know, you have dead angle on this point, you don't notice this point, so you don't, you know, with your practice is the point is wrong, you are just working for yourselves, you

are very short-sighted, near-sighted, you don't see anything, and practice zazen so you will be easily discouraged when you sit everyday with pain, with many difficulties. The human life is interesting because there is good things and bad things, half and half. We are, you know, very well mixed up, so if there is only good things, our life will not be so interesting, because we have something, some difficulties, sometime some joy, so joy makes sense, difficulties make sense. And the world we live is called *Nyen Budhi*, and there is the world called *Hokoroshu* in Buddhist parable where there is only joy. Dogen Zenji says we should be very glad to be born in this world where there is many difficulties. If we were to be born in *Hokoroshu*, we will not have Buddhist teaching, we cannot listen to Buddha because there is no need for Buddha to exist because they have no trouble there. But, I don't think we are very happy if we...if human being were to be born in *Hokoroshu*. I don't want to talk about this point so much, it is too valuable to talk about, unless you pay million dollars, I (Roshi laughs) don't want to talk about, I feel in that way. But, because tonight I have nothing to talk about, I have to say something (laughter), so I am giving you my secret treasure. But, I hope you will not understand it (laughter). You should understand it after ten, fifteen years, not now, because you may understand it just by hear, you know, "Oh," you may say, "that makes sense," that's all. Maybe this kind of thing is something you should find out. My master just said, this is, this main building is for you to mend it, for your disciples to mend it. That is what he said. I didn't take it so seriously..."what does he mean?" Because it...I couldn't come to America until my age of 54. And when I made up my mind to go to America, it was the year I accomplished...I made up my mind to come to America in October, and I finished my work of main building, April. So, when I, when I made up my mind to go to America, I said to my members, one of my members, if I could go to America ten years before, ten years ago, I had, I could have many things. I think I can many things, I think I could many things, but maybe it is too late, I can...I forgot almost all the English, even thought I have some spirit, it will not work, probably. I regret. But, on the other hand, I thought, if I...if I had gone to America ten years before, I wouldn't have this much understanding of Buddhism. So, maybe it was good thing for me to stay in Japan, doing something which was told by my master. So, point of practice is something beyond accomplishment or success. Successful or unsuccessful is not the point. What kind of accomplishment you have in not point, it doesn't matter. But the point is if your practice is...the quality of practice is good or bad, good or not so good. That is why Buddhism lasted for so long time. As Buddha pointed out in maybe, 1000, 1500 years Buddhism will die out...not die out but almost, dead teaching. It is true, if Buddhist sit for the accomplishment, when we continue our practice, if you are not, if you continue your practice, if you...if you are not so good your disciple may be good, you know, in three or four generation after you there must be some good disciple if your practice is pure enough, and your practice is good quality. Some of your descendants will do something, even though you cannot do it, that is very important point for us. Our practice is not just for ourselves, it is for everyone. And so, you know, it does matter whether you are successful or not, it does matter, if you, if you have good disciples and if you have good practice, that is the most important point. And everyone can have good practice, you know. This kind of spirit is the spirit everyone has, this kind of spirit is not just for selected people, it is for everyone. The important thing is to continue it, to continue the good practice, then someone will do it. Do you understand this point? So

that is why we say our practice should not be selfish practice. Even though you accomplish something great, if it is selfish practice, we will despise it. Don't you understand? If you don't do anything...if you are not able to do anything, if your practice is with people and for your friend and for your descendants, even though he, he cannot do anything he may be a good Buddhist. Okay? Don't say okay too soon. Think about it you know, Dogen Zenji said when he wrote *Shobogenzo*, he said, although they may not understand me, it is alright, anyway, I write it down. Someday, someone will understand it, so, for my descendant I am writing this *Shobogenzo*, giving up various chance to accomplish something, seems to be great. His point was there, that is why there is Soto school. Even though, we understand *Shobogenzo*, one character, even though we understand *Shobogenzo* intellectually, if we lose this point, it doesn't make any sense. Even though all American people converted to Buddhism, it doesn't make sense. If there is ten or twenty good students, that is enough. Our way is for everyone. Not for some particular person, for everyone who may participate our way. Don't say, there is nothing to do for me, other Buddhists, there are many things to do for you. And this is the foundation of, I think, foundation of Buddhism and foundation of practice. As this practice is for everyone, or, how it works, this teaching works as everyone's teaching is because it is enough if each one of us do something which he can, great and small, doesn't matter; we say if it is some equipment in the kitchen; there is pans and cups and bowls and many things, spoons and everything, we need everything, whether it is big or small doesn't matter, small thing is necessary as well as big ones. We must...small things should work when small thing is necessary, big one should work when big one is necessary. If small pan want to be a big one, it will be big trouble. And something which you should put higher place should be put, should be place high place, and something which should be low place, should be low place...that is famous Dogen's words: *Koje kohe, teijo, tehe* (check Japanese) That is rules...rule is not something which was made by some particular person; the moment we are here, there is rules already and each one have its own place and each one has its own position according to the position we should work, that is how we practice our way in everyday life. In this way, if we work together, that is, our monastery, that is monastic life, and which will last forever, and its gate should be open to everyone, and everyone must have some position, something to do there, with the same spirit. And our monastic life should be continued forever, and that is how our monastery works. And that is why we practice zazen with the painful legs. Excuse me, oh my...(Roshi laughs) I thought it was too short, but it was too long (laughter). Okay, excuse me, let's work hard with joy and participate the big practice, you know, this is our joy actually. don't say, "what am I doing here?", don't say so anymore if you understand this. And how valuable a thing it is to have something to work on, to have something to keep you busy (Roshi laughs). I am not fooling you at all (laughter).

Thank you very much.

EZT – early SFZC transcript – 69-07-15
