

70-07-26

MUDRA PRACTICE AND HOW TO ACCEPT INSTRUCTIONS FROM VARIOUS TEACHERS

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This morning I want to talk about our practice, as usual. As -especially when you have various teachers. So far we had Tatsugami Roshi and Yashida Roshi, and you will have-your practice must be confused a little bit-this way or that way. But actually, for you there is only one practice. There is no need to be confused. When you have right understanding of our practice of Dogen Zenji-but I don't say Dogen Zenji's way, this way or that way.

For advanced students what I want to talk about will be easily understood. For instance, when you-about mudra you have in your zazen. Keizan Zenji says put your mind on your mudra, or in your palm and some teacher-Yashida Roshi says put your thumb on your middle finger-over your middle finger. Some other teacher says put your thumb-have a vertical line by your pointing finger and thumb-like this. Recently I noticed that some of you were doing too much this way. Someone's finger-thumb is not right over middle finger. Maybe like this. Going to extreme-like this. That is not what Yashida Roshi says. This is too much. We say if your thumb is too much like this, it means your mind is being contaminated, too rigid and too narrow. If your thumb is too much like this, your mind is too open or too easy, too much free. So when your finger-thumb is like this, or just the right place, someone may say this or this, but it should not be like this or should not be too or inside.

The point is to let you, let your hands practice zazen and find your mudra right posture, and let your mudra practice zazen. When you practice zazen you are not putting your thumb this way-outside or inside. Just find good place for them to practice zazen, for mudra to practice zazen, and it is not you that is controlling your mudra. Let it have the right practice. That is how you adjust your mudra. So when you go like this, when you practice zazen, your mudra is also practicing zazen. Your mudra is independent from your practice and as your practice is independent practice, including...all the practice, all the practice, all the Buddha's practice, when you practice zazen, all the Buddhas also practicing zazen. As your mudra is practicing zazen, you yourself is also practicing zazen and every part of your body is practicing zazen. With this feeling or idea if you practice zazen, that is real practice.

Here you will have some question. When actually your legs has pain or when actually you find it difficult to have good mudra, it maybe necessary to have some idea of controlling your mudra at that time. Here Dogen Zenji-here is Dogen Zenji's answer for that-he says "For the beginner, if there is no idea of this way or that way that is not true practice. For beginner there must be some rule or some idea of controlling-having this posture or that posture, or which is right which is wrong. There must be some idea of right or wrong, good or bad. If there is no idea of good or bad for beginner, this is not

right practice either." I think this is very true. I think for most of you it is necessary to ...to force, to make some effort to keep right posture. If you let your neck or your mudra practice zazen as they like, it will not be good practice either. So he says, Dogen Zenji says, it is necessary to have some idea of practice, good practice or bad practice, but in the true practice there is no idea of controlling or controlling your physical posture. It should be quite natural with your legs and with your neck and every part of your body.

Here is Dogen Zenji's poem:

Tide ebbd, no blowing wind
An abandoned boat on the lonesome shore.
The moonlight shining meets the sky,
midnight sky.

Tide ebbd, no blowing wind
An abandoned boat on the lonesome shore.
The moonlight shining midnight sky.

This is actually Dogen Zenji's practice:

Tide ebbd, no blowing wind
An abandoned boat on the lonesome shore.
The moonlight shining midnight sky.

Ebbd tide, no blowing wind.
An abandoned boat...
and the moonlight...

Those are one or beautiful picture of seashore in midnight, in midnight. the moon is practicing zazen. A boat without anyone, boat, abandoned boat on the shore is practicing zazen. Where there is no wind and no tide. No wind disturbing his practice. No tide or wind is disturbing the boat, but above the sky the big moon is shining down. So you may say the moon does not control anything. The abandoned ship is not...disturbed by anything. each of them are practicing complete zazen. Those are, but this whole picture is also picture of zazen practice or of whole world with the midnight. But if you don't understand the point of zazen, you don't understand this picture in this way. You may put emphasis on the moon or on the abandoned ship. _____you see the abandoned ship, that maybe the point of this picture. If you see the moon, the moon is the point of this whole picture. But actually this abandoned ship and the moon is-can be the point of this picture. But there is no two point, but one point. But that one point could be boat or the moon. So your practice should be practice of the mudra. So I think that is why Keizan Zenji said-"put your mind on your palm." Like this. At that time, the mudra is practicing zazen, not you. But if you don't understand what Keizan Zenji really meant, if you don't put your mind on your palm that is not true zazen you may

say. That is wrong understanding. When you practice real zazen, actually the palm is, your mudra practices zazen. So naturally the mind of the mudra will be on-in the mudra.

Keizan Zenji is not emphasizing some particular practice of putting mind on your mudra and he does not say if you do not put your mudra (mind?) on your hands, on your palms, that is not true practice. In the true practice-actually mudra is practicing zazen with its own mind and mudra is practice-mudra's practice, mudra's zazen practice will include your practice and practice of whole world. So Dogen Zenji says-"if your practice does not include everyone's practice, that is not true practice. I am not talking about some particular practice of mind." When you have that kind of feeling or interpretation of zazen with its actual feeling, that is so-called Dogen Zenji's *shikantaza*.

If you practice in that way you will not be confused by various teacher's instructions. Various teachers' instructions have some purpose, some reason why he-why they say so. If you understand why they say so, you-various teachers' instructions will help you. But if you-it is, you know, very usual for us to say this right posture, this is not right posture. He is good teacher and he is not good teacher. But when you sincerely practice, various teachers will be a good food for your practice and you will appreciate various teachers' instructions. And you will not understand their instructions with hasty mind. You will carefully ask what does it mean and you will carefully show your way to him, to them, and ask their advice. Then you will have good instruction. Actual zazen practice is not something which you can explain in some-in your book, this way or that way. That is almost impossible, because each one of us has different difficulties in our practice. That is why you must have your teacher and you must have *dokusan* with your teacher.

so Dogen Zenji said-the point of practice is practice of zazen, actual practice of zazen, and *sanchi mampo*, *dokusan*- to ask instruction from your teacher. that is necessary, he said.

Ahh...I want you to practice more carefully and sincerely our zazen. Constant effort, constant careful effort is necessary for your zazen or it is not zazen, actual zazen. as Sekito Zenji said-step by step, observing things, you should practice zazen or else even thought you practice zazen it will not make any sense...An don't say this way or that way. And don't set up any rules. And don't be restricted by some rules. So if-when your practice is sincere enough, then you cannot be restricted in some particular way of practice. Day by day, year after year, your practice will make some progress, and then your way of practice will be changed.

(tape turned,...) your practice is not...sincere. Practice you are talking about is someone's practice-maybe Yashida Roshil's practice or Tatsugami's practice, but not your practice. Putting aside your practice and talking about someone's practice doesn't mean anything. If some teacher says-this is, will be a good way, then you should actually see if that is appropriate practice for you or not, and you should ask question, then you will have your own practice.

Anyway I am very grateful to have various teachers for you and to have various instruction from various teachers. actually we need more teachers. Unless you have real-unless you know how to practice zazen, no one can help you. You know, in the heavy rain, may wash away the small seed, the small seed, like sesame. when it has not root. You should not be like a sesame with no roots, without its own roots because if you have no roots your practice will be washed away. But if you have really a good root, even your sesame-your practice is like sesame-the heavy rain will help you a lot. So I want you not lose our good-our good chance to practice our way.

Thank you very much.

EZT – early SFZC transcript – 70-07-26
