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This lecture was the source for the chapter of *Not Always So* called "Find Out for Yourself" on p. 72.

In your zazen, perhaps you will have many difficulties or problems. But when you have some problem, it is necessary for you to try to find out by yourself why you have a problem. Before you ask someone, it is necessary for you to try to find out why.

Usually your way of study is to master it as soon as possible and by some best way. So before you think, you may ask someone why you have some problem. That way may be very good for your usual life, but if you want to study Zen, it doesn't help so much.

You should always try to find out what is really meant by "buddha-nature" or by "practice" or by "enlightenment." In this way, you will have a more subtle attitude towards everything until you understand things as it is.

If you are told something by someone, naturally you will stick to something you experienced or you understood. The moment you think you understand something, you will stick to it. And you will lose the full function of your nature.

So when you are seeking for something, your true nature is in full activity, as if you know what are you seeking for—like someone who is in the dark seeking for his own pillow because he lost it. In the dark you don't see anything but you're seeking for the pillow you lost. At that time, your mind is in full function. But if you know where the pillow is your mind is not in full function. Your mind is acting in a limited sense.

If you don't know where is the pillow, you are just seeking, worried, and your mind is open to everything. In that way, you will see things as it is.

If you want to study something it's better not to have any purpose—to study without knowing how to study, or what is Buddhism. But because you are not satisfied with something which you are told, you cannot rely on anything which was told by someone. Perhaps you may have this kind of feeling always. And I think you seek freedom just because of the freedom you seek for. You try various ways.

Of course, sometimes you will find you wasted your time. If some Zen master drinks a lot of *sake*, you may think the best way to obtain enlightenment is to drink a lot of *sake* [laughs]. Then you will attain enlightenment. But even though you drink a lot of *sake* as he does [laughs, laughter], you will not attain enlightenment [laughs, laughter].

It looks like a waste of time [laughs, laughter], but it is not so. That attitude is important. If you continue to try to find out in that way, you will gain more power to understand things.

So whatever you do, you will not waste your time. But when you do something with some limited idea or some definite purpose, what you will gain is something concrete, which will cover your inner nature. So it is not a matter of what you study, but a matter of gaining the faculty to see things as it is, to accept things as it is, to understand things as it is.

Some of you may try hard and may study something if you like it. If you don't like it, you don't. You ignore it. That is not only a selfish way, but also limiting your power of study. Good or bad, small or big, we should find out the true reason why something is so big and why something is so small, why something is so good and why something is not so good. But if you [laughs] only are trying to find out something good you will always lose something. And you are limiting your faculty. So you always live in limited world. You cannot accept things as it is.

Perhaps we have too many students in this zendō. But even if some master has two or three students, he will never tell them what our way is in detail. The only way is to eat with him, to talk with him, and to do everything with him—and to help him without even being told how to help him.

Eventually, because it is difficult to help him, you will try to find out how to help him and how to make him happy [laughs]. Mostly, he is not so happy. You will be always scolded without any reason. Maybe there is some reason, but because you don't find out why [laughs] you are not so happy and he is not so happy. So if you want to really study with him, you will try hard to find out how to please him—how to make your life happy with him.

You may say that is a very old way. I think you had sometime, in your civilization, this kind of life—not like in Japan, but there is some reason why they had this kind of difficult time with their teachers. There is no particular way for us, because each one of us is different from the other.

So each one of us must have our own way. And according to the situation, you should change your way and find some appropriate way. You cannot stick to anything. The only thing we have to do is to find some appropriate way under a new situation.

For instance in the morning we have to clean our rooms. But we do not have enough rags or brooms, so it is almost impossible to participate in our cleaning. Under these circumstances, what you should do is to find something to do [laughs]. You may think, "There is nothing for me to do." But there is, if you [laughs] try hard to find out what you should do.

I don't scold you so much, but if I were a strict Zen master I should be very angry with you [laughs], because you give up quite easily. "Oh, no. There is not much equipment to clean." Or, "There is not much to do." And if you sit on the balcony with people without helping much [laughs], you may easily give up practicing. "Maybe better not. It is not possible," or "It may be foolish to practice under these circumstances—under such bad circumstances [laughs]." You may easily give up. But in that case you should try hard. How you should practice—for instance, if you are very sleepy: "Oh, maybe better not practice zazen. Maybe it's better to rest." Yeah, sometimes it is better, but at the same time, that may a good chance to practice.

When I was at Eihei-ji serving a teacher¹—helping my teacher, he did not tell us anything. But whenever we made a mistake [laughs], he scolded. There is a kind of rule for opening left-hand—right-hand side of the sliding door. This is usual way. You open a little bit by the hole by which we open.

So I opened this way, and I was scolded: "Don't open that way! That side!" So the next morning I opened the other side [laughs]. Scolded again. I don't know what to do [laughs, laughter]. The next morning I found out that the day I open this side, his guest was on this side. To open this side is a rule. Left-hand side is the rule. But because on that morning his guest was there, I should open the other side. Before opening, I should be careful and find out which side guest is.

And one day—yeah—the day I was appointed to serve him, I gave him a cup of tea. And it is a rule, almost a rule to fill eighty percent of the cup. That is the rule. So I filled eighty percent or seventy percent [laughs]. And he said, "Give me hot, hot tea. You should fill the cup with very hot tea." So the next morning when there were some guests, I filled all the cups [laughs] with hot water almost ninety-nine percent and served them. [SR hits or slaps something.] I was scolded [laughs, laughter]!

¹ Serving Kishizawa Ian-zenji at Eihei-ji Monastery. See also SR-70-06-03.

There is no rule actually, you know [laughs, laughter]. He himself liked very hot bitter tea filled in the cup. But almost all the guests don't like bitter hot tea. So I should give him bitter hot tea. And for the guests I should have given them the usual way. In this way, he never told us anything.

When I got up twenty minutes earlier than when the hand-bell came, I was scolded. "Don't get up so early!" [Laughs]. "You will disturb my sleep." Usually if I got up earlier it was good, but for him it was not good [laughs]. In this way, if you are trying to understand things better, without any rules or prejudice, then that means selflessness.

You say "rules," but rules are already some selfish idea. Actually, there are no rules. But when you say, "This is the rule," you are forcing something on the rules to others. So actually, there are no rules. But rules are only needed when we do not have much time or when we cannot help others more closely, more kindly. Anyway, this is what rules are. So you should do that [laughs]. This is easy, you know. But actually, that is not the actual way, our way. So to give each student some instruction is not so good.

If possible, we should give instruction one-by-one. But because that is difficult, we give some instruction or lecture like this [laughs]. But you shouldn't stick to a lecture. You should think more about what [laughs] I mean—what I really mean. So for the beginner, maybe instruction is necessary, but for advanced students, we don't give so much instruction, and he should try various ways.

In this *sesshin* I feel very sorry that I cannot help you so much. But the way you study true Zen is not through some verbal things. You should open yourself, and you should give up everything. And whatever it is, you should try—anyway, you should try, whether you think it is good or bad. This is the fundamental attitude to study.

You should be like a child who draws things whether it is good or bad. Sometimes you will do things without much reason. If that is difficult, you are not actually ready to practice zazen. It is, we say "absolute surrender." But you have nothing to surrender. If you have something to surrender, it may be it is the usual way. But we have nothing to surrender. You should always find out yourself. You shouldn't lose yourself. That is the only thing you should try.

We have some more time. Do you have some questions? *Hai*.

Student A: What do you mean we don't have anything to lose—or to surrender?

Suzuki-rōshi: Oh. "Without surrender" means when you find it difficult to surrender, that is surrender. But you should know that is not complete surrender because you find it difficult. So that much you should be aware of yourself, what you are doing [laughs].

That you have a problem means you are not—not yet [taps five times with stick—once for each of previous five words] surrendered enough. [Taps several times.] Something is there, you know. So you should not attach to it, or you should not be bothered by it, or you should not be satisfied with it, whatever it is, or you should not try to avoid it because it is there [taps several times]. So you should think—or you should be aware of that problem and why you have that problem [taps several times]—that kind of problem.

You know, if you fail to serve tea, you should think why, without sticking—without making some excuse. You failed. So what should you do not to fail again? There are no rules but to be aware of what you are doing. Do you understand?

Student B: What do you mean, "We should not lose ourselves?"

Suzuki-rōshi: "Lose yourself" means you should not stick to something—some rules or some idea. You should be more realistic [laughs]. Do you understand? Lose yourself—lose—"to lose" means to stick to something, to be enslaved by something. We exist—we are always doing something, always in relation to something else. But we should not be enslaved by it. There is a difference: to be enslaved by it and to have a good relationship. When you are enslaved by it, what you do is not pure enough, realistic enough. Something is in it between you: rules or idea or idea of self. "I am doing something." "I am doing something," means I am enslaved by "me," an ideal "me." So we should be more realistic. Do you understand?

Suzuki-rōshi: *Hai.*

Student C: Do you think it's important to continue practice even when we're not feeling well? When we're ill?

Suzuki-rōshi: When you are ill, sometimes it may be better to sit even though you are ill. But sometimes you cannot. Or sometimes it may be better not to take formal posture. But you can sit—not sit, but you can practice our way whatever the situation is. Even though you are lying in bed, you can practice zazen—not zazen but—we can practice our way. *Hai.*

Student D: In the beginning of my practice of zazen it was suggested that I count my breaths. Are there other methods I could use? Should I just experiment around with different ways.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. For an instance—usually our breathing is very shallow, and if you continue shallow breathing in zazen because, in everyday activity, you naturally—sometime you take deep breathing like this [gestures], or when you do some particular activity you take a deep breath. But in zazen, if do shallow breathing always, it creates a problem because in zazen you cannot *do like this* [speaking in an ironic voice—sounding very tight or compressed], [laughs]. So you are always like this without taking deeper breaths. So that is why I say, take deeper breaths. You should try to make your breathing deeper. *Hai.*

Student E: Rōshi, why do people suffer? Why do people suffer?

Suzuki-rōshi: Suffer? Yeah. Suffering means spiritual suffering especially or some, or most of the physical suffering too. When you expect something, you have suffering already, because actually things don't go as you expect. So there is suffering already. Even if you are ill, for instance, if you do not try too much to get well, it is pretty good. It is not so bad. But if you try to get well too much, that is suffering. So you should—when you are ill, you should accept it. "Oh, I not so well [laughs]. Maybe someday I shall be all right." Then you do not have much suffering. So, some idea will create suffering—when you expect something, we already have suffering. And that expectation is not realistic enough, usually. *Hai.*

Student F: If you try—I guess if you try not to have expectation, that's negative expectation.

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh.

Student F: But if you get into wanting to expect—like someone would say, "Would you like to go get an ice cream cone?"

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh.

Student F: How—how do you, in your daily life, how do you keep from—how do you keep a healthy mind from not expecting when some people, without knowing it, want you to get into expecting it with them?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. That is, if you don't know the nature of suffering you will suffer more. But if you know why you suffer, then you think, "I expect too much. There is no ice cream here," [laughs] so I shouldn't think about ice cream. That there is no ice cream is already not so good. But if I expect it—if I want [laughs, laughter] to have it, you make yourself words [laughs, laughter]. So in that way, you will be relieved from a lot of suffering.

Student G: Rōshi, you said not to get stuck or caught by some particular idea. But it seems like many ideas have two sides.

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh.

Student G: And you get stuck on one side—still that allows the other side to help you. For instance, if you get caught by the idea of the *sangha*—

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student G: —become imprisoned by *sangha* or an idea of practice—

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

Student G: —even though you're caught by it, still it's kind of a skillful way for a *sangha* to help you, because it keeps you with it.

Suzuki-rōshi: Oh, yeah.

Student G: But how—it's a very strange feeling, if you find yourself afraid to stop practice or to change practice—

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

Student G: —out of some formal *sangha*, because you're getting caught by both sides of the idea.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

Student G: Even though the other side may help you, still, you know, still you're caught.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. If you know that point—it is necessary to know, to understand that much. Without understanding it, if you push one way always—one side always, that will be awful. So at least we should know both sides. Then the rules we have will help us. But because we don't know the other side, rules don't help at all—make us worse.

So our *sangha* is a small world itself or society itself. We will know—we will learn many things. For us it is necessary to know or to understand why we have rules—why he says so. Like you steal something [laughs]. Why you should steal his way. Or you should understand what he means—actually what he means without being caught by rules or words or what he says. And he should know why we have rules and why you have to say something to others. So

actually, there are no rules. But [laughs], the rules are good devices.
Hai.

Student H: In zazen, if the cushion before your eyes begins to glow, or you see the bodhisattvas blinking their eyes, or the people on each side of you seem to be *makyō*, what is happening?

Suzuki-rōshi: What is happening? Maybe that is a good experience. But sometimes it is because of your bad breathing exercise. If it is healthy, a good experience for you, of course that is very good. But sometimes, it is just some created idea because of your unhealthy practice. It is not always good.

Student H: Well, one feels very peaceful when one sees this—

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm

Student H: —then perhaps it's good.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

Student H: But if, for instance, there's a feeling of a strong weight on the head—

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

Student H: —then that's unpleasant.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

Student H: And one doesn't know what to do.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. That is your breathing is not so good. And even though it is good, we shouldn't stick to it.

Almost time?

Thank you very much.

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