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MAHĀYĀNA AND HĪNAYĀNA BUDDHISM
Sunday, January 25, 1970
San Francisco

This lecture was the source for the chapter of *Not Always So* called "Caring for the Soil" on p. 47.

The difference between so-called-it Therāvada Buddhism and Sarvāstivādin or Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna is very important and directly concerned with our present problem. We are supposed [laughing] to be Mahāyāna Buddhists, but I think most of us are Hīnayāna, actually. There are not many Mahāyāna students. Almost all of us may be Hīnayāna or sectarian Buddhists because we study Buddhism as something which is already given to us—like Hīnayāna Buddhists thought Buddha already have given us the wonderful teaching. So what we should do is to preserve his teaching like you put food in refrigerator [laughs]. That is Hīnayāna way. And to study Buddhism is to take out food from refrigerator. So whenever you want it, it is already there. That is Hīnayāna way of understanding.

But Mahāyāna students are rather interested in how to produce food from the field—from the garden. So naturally Mahāyāna Buddhists put the emphasis on ground or garden which has nothing in it, which you don't see anything in it. If you see the garden, you don't see anything. But if you take care of the seed, it will come out.

So we Mahāyāna Buddhists make our effort to see something come out from the ground. And the joy of the Mahāyāna Buddhist is the joy of taking care of the garden. That is Mahāyāna Buddhist. That is why Mahāyāna Buddhists put emphasis on emptiness. Emptiness is a garden where you cannot see anything. But it is, actually, mother of everything, from which everything will come out.

The teaching eventually will be almost same, but our attitude towards the teaching is different. So actually, Mahāyāna teaching and Hīnayāna teaching does not differ so much. And so we say, "We should practice Hīnayāna teaching with Mahāyāna spirit, with the gratitude of raising things or taking care of teaching or to appreciate teaching. How to appreciate teaching from nothing is, actually, our practice.

All of us has buddha-nature, so the teaching which will grow from the buddha-nature will be the same. But the attitude is different. When you think the teaching is already given to you, then your effort—how to apply the teaching in this common world, the ordinary world—they make a great effort to apply the teaching to our mundane world. So that is a difficulty they had.

And more and more the teaching is flavor or real sense. Yoshimura-sensei told you about something—a teaching of 12 links. I think most of them listened to his lecture. And the Hīnayāna understanding of the 12 links and Mahāyāna understanding of it is quite different. One is, Hīnayāna Buddhist apply that teaching of 12 links to our actual life, how we born and how we die.

But the original purpose of the teaching—when Buddha told us the teaching, he used it to explain the interdependency of various beings. So there is a big difference between the interpretations of the same teaching.

More and more Buddha's teaching became very common and meaningless. How Buddha tried to save us is to destroy our common sense.

We are not usually, as a human being, we are not interested in nothingness, the nothingness of the ground [laughs]. If you have something in the garden, you will be interested in something which is in the garden. That is our tendency. But we are not so much interested in—the usual person, at least, is not interested in the bare soil. If you actually want to have a good harvest, the most important thing, of course, is to make rich soil and to cultivate the soil and to weed the soil. That is the most important thing.

The Buddha's teaching is about not what is there, but how it grows and how to take care of things. So he is not interested in various ideas of deity. But he is rather interested in the deity which will grow [laughs] from the ground. So for him everything may be some holy being—not a special given deity. So he looks like an atheist. He was not interested in some special deity, which we find out as something which is already there. He is not interested in them. But he was interested in the ground from which various gods will appear.

And this difference, or lack of understanding of Buddhism result many non-Buddhist practice. For instance, in this zendō, in our group, we have officers [laughs]. But, officers are someone who appeared from the group. So sometimes officers are not someone who is the most respectable—which we must know from where he appeared [laughs]. From our group he appeared, tentatively, to take care of our group. That is officer. But when we understand officers or respect officers as someone who is selected from your group, and who is the most respectable people because he is an officer, that is a very un-Buddhistic understanding. As we are living as a Buddhist in this Zen center, there must be someone who should take care of our group. That is officer.

As an officer he should be interested in to take care of our group rather than someone who is respectable, who is capable. There is big difference

in understanding themselves and in understanding officers—their own understanding as an officer and people's understanding of officer.

I am not blaming [laughs] anyone who is in the position of an officer, but as an example, I'm talking about this matter, but don't misunderstand me. When you become an officer you think you are some special person. [Laughs.] That is also very un-Buddhistic idea. Each one of us comes out of the ground of Zen Center. The ground [laughs] is the most important thing from which every one of us comes out. So it is the ground which should be taken care of—not the plant. If the ground is good, naturally good officers will appear. So we should respect all of the members of the group. Take care of Zen Center and you yourself, as a member of Zen Center.

When you think an officer is some special person, that understanding is to understand things more as an understanding of substantiality, a concrete idea. An officer as some special being—that is already a concrete idea. Officer is someone who appeared from the members, not a special person. Cannot be any special person, because any one of you can be an officer. If members are very good, any one of you can be an officer. But because the soil is not so good [laughs], so only capable one should be officer. The fault is each one of you—the reason why you should choose a special person. And a special person should feel so bad to be appointed always to the same position [laughs]. "Oh, it's awful! [Laughs.] I wish someone can take my place. We are all good spirit. Anyone can be an officer. But that I should always be an officer is very regretful thing." The officers should understand themselves in that way. Then that is a very Buddhistic understanding of their position.

So Buddha says: "If people are good, good buddha will appear." Because if people in some country, at some time are not good, they will not have a good buddha. That is a very interesting remark. Buddha did not think himself to be some special person. He tried to be like the most common people wearing ragged robe, making trip with a begging bowl, without having any special novel teaching. He just tried to be a good friend of people. That was why Buddha appeared in this world, and that was what he did at his time in India.

Because he had that kind of spirit or understanding of the world, he could be a buddha. And he thought that "I have many students because students are very good"—not Buddha himself. That is the most Buddhistic understanding of teaching. But after Buddha, the people respect his teaching or respect Buddha because of his teaching and his character. Maybe his teaching was very good, but why his teaching was very good is his understanding of life was good. His understanding of emptiness or his understanding of people was good. And because his understanding of people was good, he loved people, and he enjoyed

helping people. And that was why Buddha was great. [*Sentence finished. Tape turned over.*]

He did not enjoy himself as some special person or special sage [laughs]. He enjoyed himself as a friend of people. And he was amazed at people's buddha-nature, which is in each person. So when he attained enlightenment, he said, "It is wonderful to see the buddha-nature in every one of us." That was what he said when he attained enlightenment.

And buddha-nature is not some special nature which only human being has. In Buddhism, when we say "sentient beings," it includes plants and stones and mountains and stars and the sun and everything. That is sentient being. So, in short, it is emptiness. The ground from which everything comes out—stars and moon and everything comes out—that is emptiness. That is why we put emphasis on emptiness. So emptiness could be sometimes, tentatively Zen Center or America or Japan or this world or this cosmos, from which everything comes out. So the purpose of our practice is how to take care of Zen Center, how to take care of America, how to take care of this world or this cosmos, and enjoy things which appear.

I said we are mostly Hīnayāna Buddhists [laughs], although we call ourselves, we think ourselves Mahāyāna Buddhist—maybe because we don't mind [laughs] so much about precepts, or we eat meat and fish. Because we don't mind as a Mahāyāna Buddhist to eat meat and to eat fish, Mahāyāna Buddhist is not so lazy.

So we are Mahāyāna Buddhist. But that is not [laughing] real Mahāyāna Buddhist. Of course, Mahāyāna Buddhist doesn't mind so much about any special given teaching.

But we should not be caught by the idea of substantiality. To be caught by the idea of substantiality means to become dualistic. When we put emphasis on emptiness, in emptiness there is no dualistic idea. If you start to have a dualistic idea of emptiness that is not emptiness. A dualistic understanding appears when you have some idea of substantiality. When you have some idea of duality—priest and officer—officers and students—that kind of idea is already very substantial.

Because there are students, there is an officer who takes care of students. Without students [laughs] there is no officer. But you may think, "I was once an officer of Zen Center." [Laughing.] He thinks he is always an officer [laughs]. Very substantial idea. That kind of idea is not our idea.

In Sōtō school there are ridiculous things, like giving some title to a person [laughs]. I think only when I was in Zen Center, I am a teacher of Zen Center. I am a teacher. If I go back to Japan, I don't think I can be

a teacher any more because I am already too Americanized [laughs, laughter]. I don't know what is going on in America. So I cannot be a teacher if I go back to Japan. That is right. I should be like that.

If I think I am always a teacher wherever I go, even though I join monkey teachers [laughing]—ridiculous idea. I cannot be a teacher of a monkey or monkey group or teacher of fish. That is not possible. So I should not have any special title. But here, today, I shall be a teacher of you. I think that is a real teacher.

But people, very Hīnayānistic people think, "I'm always a teacher. I am entitled as a teacher by Sōtō headquarters" [laughs, laughter]. That is very Hīnayānistic idea. And that is, I think, why I don't like sectarianism. But most people are involved in this kind of misunderstanding. That is why there is some difficulty in the management of the group. If we really become interested in Mahāyāna Buddhism, there is no problem of this kind.

Even though we are teacher and disciple, teacher and student, we are eternally friends of Buddhism. That is very important statement, I think. We are eternally friends. Tentatively, even though we have a position, but we are eternally friends. This point should not be forgotten.

Thank you very much.

Source: City Center tape transcribed by Sara Hunsaker (2/27/00). Transcript checked against tape by Bill Redican (5/22/00). Lightly edited for readability by Gordon Geist (4/14/05).