

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
9 AM *SESSHIN* LECTURE
Friday, July 30, 1965
Lecture B
Soko-ji Temple, San Francisco

Tape operator: The sentence about "your mind"¹ was in the meditation before breakfast, and beginning here is the instruction at nine o'clock Friday morning.

Suzuki-rōshi: I have to give the conclusion to my talk for this *sesshin*. The science or philosophy is like a dissection. It is possible to analyze what we did after we did something [1 word]. But it is already dead corpse [laughs]—dead corpse of our practice. So even though you analyze what you have done, it will not work. It will not help you so much. It is nearly the same as to count your lost child's age [laughs]. So we cannot help counting our lost boy's age. It is our nature, but actually it will not help us so much.

So the most important thing is to understand our true mind or inmost nature in our practice. How we understand our actual mind is the most important point—should be the most important point. That is why Zen emphasize to live on each moment.

Bodhidharma said—Bodhidharma, the First Patriarch of Chinese patriarch—he is 28th patriarch from Buddha, and in China he is the First Patriarch—and he said, "If you want to see a fish—if you want to see a fish, before you see a fish, you have to watch water." Do you understand? If you want to see a fish, you have to watch water before you see the fish. If you want to see the buddha-nature, you have to see your small mind before you see buddha-nature. Actually, when you see water, there is true fish. Don't you think so? Here, by "fish" he meant "true nature." If you want to see the true nature, when you see the water, there is true nature. The true nature is watching water. You are watching water. At the same time, true nature is watching water.

As Decartes says, "I think, therefore I am." What does it mean? Here, "therefore I am": I—that "I" is not just small mind. He could not deny that "I" which thinks, which watch water. That someone, who is watching—you—who is watching water is true nature itself. You think fish is true nature [laughing], but it is not true nature. You—you are watching water. And that "you" cannot be denied. That is ultimate existence. And at the same time, that is universal existence. That is your "I" and at the same time it include everything.

¹ "Don't be bothered by your mind." [SR-65-07-30-A]

Anyway, when you watch water, there is actually—actual fish is in the water. Before you see the wa- [partial word]—fish, there is fish. Before you see the buddha-nature, you see your mind. You watch your mind. When you watch your mind, when you say, "My zazen is very poor [?] zazen" [laughs], here you have true nature. But you, you know, fail to realize—do not realize that is true nature. You ignore it on purpose. This is a silly mistake. There is immense importance in the "I" when you watch your mind. That "I" is not big "I." That "I" is always incessant activity. That "I" is always acting. That "I" is always swimming. That "I" is always fly[ing] through the vast air with wing. Here I mean by "wing," thinking and various activity. That "I" is flying through the vast sky.

In this case, the vast sky is his home—is my home. There is no bird or no air. Air and bird is one. So Dōgen-zenji says, "Fly—bird flies like a bird; fish swims like a fish. Water is his home. And when she swims—when it swims in the water, it is water and a fish are—a fish—there is nothing but fish. The all the water belongs to him. And when he can swim everywhere, it means he can think. That thinking is right thinking. Logical thinking, after you did something, or analytical thinking is not true thinking.

So in your practice, whether or not that practice is good or bad, perfect or imperfect, when this kind of mind is at work, your practice is practice of enlightenment. Your practice include everything, within and without. Whole world is your home, and everything belongs to you.

So that you can understand this short statement: "Fish swims like a fish, water—bird flies like a bird," I—not denied, but I explained what is logic, what is philosophy, what is science. Because you are firmly believing scientific truth, and you are caught by scientific way of life, you have no idea of what is true mind. You are always watching shadow of the—chasing after the shadow of the mind. Philosophical interpretation or psychological interpretation of your mind is just a shadow of the mind, and you are firmly believe in it. So you mistake enlightenment for drugs, LSD [laughs]. If the Sixth Patriarch is here, what he will say [laughing]? "With such a people I cannot talk," he may say.

We have shadow. It is inevitable to have shadow for us. But to try to step on your shadow [laughs] is impossible. How can you catch your shadow? If you goes—if you try to step [on] your shadow, shadow will be ahead of you [laughs]. If you go one step behind [laughs], shadow will be one step behind of you. It is impossible. It is foolish to think "future" or "past." Why don't you catch yourself in this moment? When you are doing something, you are there. You are too much attached to visible things.

So when the Second Chinese Patriarch² see Bodhidharma, and confessed his shameful mind, he [Bodhidharma] said, "Bring me a shameful mind [laughs]. Catch the shameful mind." He [Eka] said that—he said, "I cannot catch it." Of course [laughs], no one can catch it. If you try to catch it, that is shadow, you know. How can—can you catch the shadow of your hand [laughs]? So you [he] said, "I cannot catch it." And Bodhidharma said, "The confession is over."³ [Laughs, laughter.]

So accurate—what they point out is so accurate, you cannot move back and forth. There is no need even to read one page of a book. There is no need even to listen to it. It is here [thumps] [laughs]. Before fish comes, there is fish [laughs]. In *Sandōkai* [?] said, "Before the night is here—when—even—before night has not gone, the dawn is here." When you watch—when you waiting for dawn, dawn is here; you are there, right there. Your true mind is that right there. When you wondering, the true mind is right there. When you are suffering, the true mind is right there, with suffering.

Science cannot solve this problem. Even [4-5 words]. The true activity will stop—true activity of your life is no more. So if you do not catch it, when you are active, how can you catch it? And there is a way to catch it. That is our practice. That is *sesshin*. *Shin* is mind. To catch our true mind is *sesshin*. This mind cannot be caught by thinking—thinking mind, or feeling. It is too late. So moment after moment, to watch your breathing, to watch your posture is to dwell on your true nature. There is no secret beside this point.

Source: City Center original tape. Verbatim transcript by Judith Randall and Bill Redican (6/15/01).

² Dazu Huike (Taiso Eka): 487–593.

³ This exchange probably took place shortly after Bodhidharma accepted Huike as his disciple (see, e.g., Andy Ferguson, *Zen's Chinese Heritage*, Boston: Wisdom, 2000, p. 20).