

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi

December 17, 1966

**DECEMBER ONE-DAY *SESSHIN* LECTURE: Saturday Evening
Lecture B**

The fourth instruction is:¹

***The Need for Training in Buddhism without Self-Seeking
Mind***

In Buddhist training we always received the true Key handed down by our predecessors. How can we use our selfish mind for this? We cannot gain Buddhism with mind or without mind. Just remember that if the training will—will—training will and the Buddhist way to do—Buddhist way do not combine, our body and mind are not calm. If not calm, our body and mind are not comfortable.

If we have gaining idea, we cannot practice Buddhism, which is something beyond our ordinal [ordinary] purpose of life. Usually our conscious activity is directed towards some merit or some result. We are expecting result, whatever we do. But there may be difference—there may be two cases: one you expect result after doing something, and you expect the result within your activity. There is—there may be two cases. The—to practice zazen because of the interest in practicing zazen is also, strictly speaking, a gaining idea. Of course, to expect something after your practice, this is of course gaining idea. "If you practice zazen you will be healthy," or "You will have some mystic power like some magic." This is, of course, is not Zen.

Maybe you will attain some result. But we do not practice it for sake of the wonderful result we will have. But it—but it does—it does not mean that zazen has—zazen practice has no advantage. It has some—it will result [in] something good for you, actually [laughs]. But we do not practice it for sake of the result we will have. And we should be ashamed of to practice Zen which is to practice religious practice with gaining idea.

Gaining idea usually limits our meaning of practice. Our practice is not—our practice has the limitless meaning in it. So that is why Zen has eternal life in it. Because if Zen is some practice directed towards some result—some particular result, it will not—it will be the practice which you have in your everyday life. And why Zen help us in its true

¹ Suzuki-rōshi is reading and commenting on Section 4 of *Points to Watch in Buddhist Training (Gakudō-yōjin-shū)*, a fascicle written by Dōgen in 1234, in Reihō Masunaga (Ed. and Trans.), *Zen for Daily Living*, Tōkyō, Shunjūsha Publishing, 1964, pp. 56–72.

sense is because it will cut off the root of the problems we have. If you know how to practice zazen, you will know how to cut off your root of suffering—root of trouble. That is why our practice is valuable.

So the most important thing is to practice zazen in its true sense, in the transmitted way from Buddha to us. In Buddhism or in Zen, we have had various problems to discuss. But after all, we came to the conclusion that this practice is the most fundamental practice for—to understand- [partial word]—for understanding of profound meaning of Buddhism.

In Buddhist training we always received the true Key handed down by our patriarchs. How can we use our selfish mind for this? We cannot gain Buddhism with mind or without mind.

"With mind" means—"with mind or without mind" means you say—even though you say "without mind," still you have gaining idea. So he says "with mind or without mind." It is not matter of how to gain—how to understand Buddhism by mind, or if it is without mind, by what mind we can gain the [1-2 words]. This kind of question will follow one after the other.

So the purpose—so our way is to practice zazen as a—as our way transmitted from Buddha. Here we want absolute surrender. Before this surrender—absolute surrender come to you, it is not possible to practice zazen in its true sense. We do not ask why. We do not wonder the result of the practice. Whether we have the result or not is out of question. But the most obvious thing—the ultimate part is that you are here as a follower of Buddhist. So as a follower of Buddhist, you should practice the [taps twice, possibly on the *tan* to indicate zazen]—that's all. There is no reason.

If you are not a Buddhist, maybe you—there will be no need for you [laughs] to practice zazen. Because you are here you have to do it, that's all [laughs]. Quite simple. Even though you are very tired, you are right here. So as long as you are here, you should listen to me. "Oh, you should practice zazen. That's all."

So if tea come, you should drink tea. If you have cake, you should eat cake. [Laughs.] That's all. That is exactly how we exist in this world. This is the way how everything exist here. This is zazen. So even though you do not enjoy the experience of Zen, Zen is Zen. So to practice zazen is also the goal of practice, whether it is, you know, joyous nor not joyous. It is the goal of practice. There is no other goal.

So our way is—our goal is—is not somewhere within or—within reach or beyond our reach. Or our goal does not—does not exist in our

practice. You—you think you will—you sit because you will have some joy in your practice. That is why you sit, you may say. And actually, because you have some joy, you sit [laughs]. But even though you do not feel any joy, you have to sit [laughs]. That is what he is saying. So there is no problem [laughs, laughter]. This is how to cut off the root of the problem.

You may say, then, whatever you do, that may be Zen, you know [laughing]. So there will be no need for you to sit. Even though you do not sit, to have breakfast, to sleep, to go to bed is also zazen. If so, there will be no need for you to sit in cross-legged position all day long. [Laughs, laughter.] "It may be waste of time"—you may say so. But actually, fortunately or unfortunately you are here. It is too late [laughs, laughter] to say so.

And if you sit and—our practice is not—moreover, our practice is not just to sit. Whatever you do, that is zazen. Why? Because you know what is true meaning of Zen. So for you, whatever you do, that is zazen [laughs]. But for people who do not know what is zazen, you know, even though it is actually zazen, but for—for the people who do not know what is zazen, that is not Zen for him only. But for—for us, you know, whatever they do, that is zazen. I unders- [partial word]—we understand that, as you understand whatever you do that is zazen. So whatever others do, that is also zazen. This is our understanding of zazen.

So by selfish mind, or with mind or without mind, we cannot gain our way.

Just remember that if the training will—training will and Buddhist way do not combine, our body and mind are not calm.

If you do not practice with this understanding, your mind will not be calm.

If not calm, our body and mind are not comfortable.

So when you have some doubt or problem, you should consider whether your understanding of life is right or wrong. The absolute—ultimate teaching is always like this. For an instance, everyone has buddha-nature, we say. But you cannot say because everyone has buddha-nature, or therefore [laughs] you—everyone has buddha-nature, therefore or because. If you, you know, limit the meaning of the statement, putting "therefore" or "because" [laughs], that is not the ultimate truth. But when you understand it, you put "because" or "therefore." You know, you say "everyone has buddha-nature. Therefore [laughs] there will not be no difference whether we practice zazen or not, you know. You limit the meaning of the—original

meaning of the statement by putting "therefore." You use the statement for your own excuse [laughs].

We—everyone has buddha-nature. Period. That is how to listen to the ultimate truth. There is no room for the statement to accept your reasoning. Then your body—your being and your mind will combine. It does not mean to force something on you. To see you yourself as you are—that is perfect combination of body and mind. This is the perfect calmness of your mind.

What should we do to couple the training will—training will with the Buddhist way? Our mind neither clings nor forsakes. The mind is free from fame and profit.

"Training will with Buddhist way." Our training will must not be the usual training will which you do by some purpose—which you do by means of something.

Our mind neither clings nor forsaken—forsakes. The mind is free from fame and profit.

We do not train in Buddhism for others. Like most people these days, the mind of the Buddhist trainee is quite far from the way. He practices what others praise although he knows that it is false. He does not practice what others scorn although he knows that it is the true way. This is indeed a cause of—cause for regret.

Usually people practice it for sake of profit or fame, even though he himself knows that isn't right. He emphasize this point very much.

When viewed objectively, this hardly seems the proper use of the true Buddhist mind. The penetrating eyes of Buddhas and patriarchs illuminate—illuminated egolessness—egolessly. We should emulate them.

This kind of way of practice is not right—is not proper, they know. But because they do not know what is Buddhism or because they do—they do not even expect something better way, and they are doomed in those useless way. So they [are] just caught by the fame and profit and practice zazen.

Buddhist trainee do very little for themselves. How can they do anything for fame and profit? They must train in Buddhist—Buddhism only for Buddhism. The various Buddhas, feeling deep compassion for all beings, do not [nothing] for themselves or for others. They merely act for Buddhism. This is the Buddhist tradition.

Buddhist trainee usually do not very little—oh—do very little for themselves. How can they do anything for fame and profit?

They do not know how to save themselves, and so they do very little for themselves.

How can they do anything for fame and profit?

They say "fame and profit," but how can they do it? They are just trying to do so, but it will not work.

They must train in Buddhism only for Buddhism.

Buddhism is for sake of Buddhism, not for others or not for themselves: just to follow our way is our traditional way.

The various Buddhas, feeling deep compassion for all beings, do nothing for themselves or for others. They merely act for Buddhism. This is the Buddhist tradition.

In Buddhism, in our practice, there is no idea—no different idea, or no dualistic idea for ourselves or for others. Just we do it—practice it for sake of Buddhism.

They merely act for Buddhism. This is the Buddhist tradition.

Observe how even insects and animals nurse their young and bear hardship to bring them up. When the young—when the young reach maturity, the parents seek no profit.

This is our way.

Compassion for the young is strong even among tiny living creatures. Likewise, the various Buddha have a natural compassion for living beings. The [superb] teaching of the Buddhas are not limited to compassion. They are expressed universally in many facet—facets. This is the basic spirit of Buddhism.

So we say "compassion" or "Buddhism," but actually in true—for true Buddhism there is no name—no name of Buddha or no name or compassion or mercy. By those names we just limit the true meaning of compassion or Buddha. If so, the only way to grasp the true meaning of the word is just practice it without any gaining idea before we know what it is, just [as] a bird or animal raise their babies up. This is how to study Buddhism in its true—strict sense.

Today I think our practice may not be so good because I myself could not devote myself to the practice thoroughly. But I think we are reached in—we have reached to some stage—reached to some—reached some stage where we can practice the true way. At least even though quite a few—some of us understand this is the true way, and this is how to live in this world in its true sense. Even though it looks like strange way to understand our meaning of life, but it is not so.

We have had very difficult time before we reach this understanding: the understanding where there is no problem of attainment, there is—where there is no problem of distinction between religion in its true sense, where we can find the advantage—various advantage of—in various religion. And people say nowadays we are busy, but to have fine chance to sit here in this way is very valuable. This is very rare opportunity. We should not neglect—we should not waste this rare opportunity to practice zazen.

Thank you very much.

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