

**INTERVIEW [SHOSAN] CEREMONY ENDING
AUGUST *SESSHIN*, 1967
August 24, 1967
Tassajara**

NOT VERBATIM

INTRODUCTION: [Opening sentences missed.]

... teaching of Dōgen-zenji. The main point of practice is to listen to your teacher and to practice zazen. We have you practice zazen and study the *Prajna Paramita Sutra*. If someone ask me: What is *Prajna Paramita*? I will answer: practice of zazen. If someone ask again: What is the practice of zazen? I will answer: To open Buddha's eating bowl and to take bath in evening. If someone who understands what I said right now, come and express your way to me in the form of question and answer.

Question 1 (Dick): For the Big Mind, the bridge flows. If everything has such independence, how can we find our own responsibility?

Roshi: Your responsibility is under your own feet.

Dick: Thank you very much.

Roshi: [LOUD] Ehhhhhh! What is that? What is that is the question and at the same time the answer. That is what.

Question 2 (Linda): How should we practice negation?

Roshi: Negation is at the same time--negation means liberation. Can negation after negation, you attain step by step liberation.

Linda: I am deeply grateful.

Question 3 (male): Are the pure teachings transmitted to us only through the patriarchs and the great masters?

Roshi: Yes, it is so, but great teachers and masters is not only living being.

#3: I am deeply grateful.

Question 4 (male): Using the mantra you gave me, I broke through one dam of spiritual tension. Should I continue using this mantra to break further dams?

Roshi: As long as you are devoted single heartedly to your attainment, you can use that mantra. You cannot use it for other

purpose.

#4: I am deeply grateful.

Question 5 (female): Why is it necessary to have some kind of unusual experience in order to practice Buddhism?

Roshi: To open up your mind wider and wider.

#5: I am deeply grateful.

Question 6 (male): One hears so often in Zen about doing what one must do rather than what one wants to do. Is it possible to know what one must do before one has the desire to do it.

Roshi: Your teacher will put you in that circumstance. Follow our way. At first you think you are following the way, but soon you will drive the way.

Question 7 (male): When many of us leave here and leave you sticks(?) and your lectures, it will be difficult to continue good zazen. You suggested one method of calling our name or finger. The question is: since there is no subject who is doing zazen, who is calling and who is being called?

Roshi: When you call your name, you will immediately--you will immediately feel yourself. When you feel yourself, that is--you feel the Shakyamuni Buddha's voice. Form is emptiness, and emptiness is form.

#7: I am deeply grateful.

Question 8 (female): Where does the need come from to bow to Buddha, and who is Buddha when we bow?

Roshi: When you bow, who [is] Buddha? When you bow, you are the Buddha.

#8: I am deeply grateful.

Question 9 (Mike Dixon): What is the difference between sesshin and everyday life? This is a useless question.

Roshi: Of course sesshin is everyday life; everyday life is sesshin. Although, the way is different, but that is the different expression of our practice. Again form is emptiness and emptiness is form.

#9: Than you very much.

Question #10: How does one cut off consciousness at the root?

Roshi: There is no root for the consciousness. If you understand this, you already cut off the root of consciousness. All that you do, all the consciousness is--has no root. It is rooted, you should know that it is rooted, it is firmly rooted on Buddha nature. Again form is emptiness, and emptiness is form.

Question 11: Why is self-centeredness so hard to overcome?

Roshi: Because you try to get rid of it.

#11: *Arigato gozaimazu.*

Question 12 (Marion Derby): Great stress seems to have been made on sitting quietly, and yet Buddha gave up asceticism. I can't reconcile the two, because there is so much pain in sitting quietly.

Roshi: Just sit in squatting position is not zazen. [Cannot make sentence here] practice is—zazen practice is supposed to be the easiest way to practice our way or to understand our way. So you should practice it when you really want to, but for a while until your real way-seeking mind arise, you will be forced -zazen practice will be forced on you. Something which does not like to be forced on you is not the true way. True way at first looks like some morality, or something which was forced on you. This is quite usual, but it will not be so forever.

#12: I am deeply grateful.

Question 13 (male): What is meant by the statement: "Cessation of thought is the cause of thought"?

Roshi: What is quotation from?

#13: From your lecture this afternoon.

Roshi: I cannot figure out, I am sorry. This afternoon--what I meant was, incessant practice is necessary. Before autumn come, already autumn is here. You see? There is no gap between autumn and spring. So when summer come, before summer is over autumn is here. There is no gap between it. So is our practice. True practice has no gap between it. So one practice will be continued through and through forever.

#13: Cessation of thought ...

Dick: I don't remember you saying that.

Roshi: Cessation of thought-cause of thought. Maybe so. That something appears means something which appears should disappear. Cessation of appears also--as soon as some thought stop, not next thought should arise. But this thought is not just intellectual thought, but thought with more deeper sense. So one after another, our practice will be continued. If that is delusion, that is succession of delusion, but at the same time, if your practice is good that is succession--continuity of your pure practice. Where there is delusion, there is pure practice. It is--it is always so. So to practice zazen avoiding thought or consciousness is like a--like to see the Dipper facing to the south! You should work on your thought. You should involve the thought within your deep mind. Don't be bothered by it.

#13: Thank you very much.

Question 14 (Pat Herreshiff): Do we, each and everyone of us, have inside of us a wish granting gem, a magic jewel, that if we wish sincerely and deeply for something, this will help with our effort, and if so, how can this become significant in our practice?

Roshi: Whatever you have, that is actually gem. We shouldn't expect it from outside. Then all the jewel you have, spiritually and mentally will serve its own purpose without destroying you. You shouldn't expect from outside.

Pat: Thank you very much.

Question 15 (Peter Schneider): Dōchō Roshi, do you have some question?

Roshi: Yes, I have question. Why are you so serious? (Silence, then Peter laughs, and then the whole assembly breaks into laughter.) If you start to laugh, that is all right.

Peter: I am deeply grateful.

Question 16 (Sheridan): In my practice, I find there is part of me that stubbornly doesn't want to see or to realize my true nature. How can I work with resistance rather struggle against it in order to become a more sincere student?

Roshi: "How to" is the way. How to, how to, how to. That is continuity of 'how to' is Buddhism. Our way is nothing but that continuity of "how to, how to, how to." Whatever scripture you read, what is written in it is how to help all sentient beings attain enlightenment and liberation, how to, how to, how to. You are one of

the sentient beings and you're trying to save them, save all sentient beings including yourself. That is how to, how to, how to. You see? "How to" is very valuable word. It is--actually it is not you trying too hard to attain enlightenment. Buddha is trying to do so--how to, how to, how to. Like your mother, you know, trying to communicate with you: "How to communicate with you?" she may say. Same thing.

Sheridan: I am deeply grateful.

Question 17 (male): If there is no beginning, no end, and no existence, what is the use of a question?

Roshi: To recall something which is unknown, to call back something unknown, to address Buddha.

#17: I am deeply grateful.

Question 18 (Male): May one always apply the absolute, rather than the intellectual, to existence, to his life?

Roshi: [Said in a kind of prayer fashion:] May all of us forget all about good and bad, and acknowledging their own position with each other. And may the perfect communication take place between them. Your wish comes from emptiness. My wish comes from various--each being. But may those two understanding get together help with each other and attain our Buddha's way. That is my wish.

#18: I am deeply grateful.

Question 19 (Female): I have many relatives who are very old, and who fear death. Is there anything I can do to help them?

Roshi: The only way--there is no way to repay them for their kindness. There is no way. You cannot do that. But there is only one way for you. That is to practice our way with sound body and sound mind and to be happy with what you have and what you can do. That is the only way to repay their benevolence.

#19: Thank you very much.

Question 20 (Male): When my greed is not satisfied, anger arises. What is the real relationship between my anger and my greed?

Roshi: You think your anger comes from greed. That may not be so. Greed comes from the same thing. Anger also comes from that same thing. You should know the real cause of the greed and anger.

#20: I am deeply grateful.

Question 21 (Silas Headley?): Dōchō Roshi, on the mountain-top, how would desire?

Roshi: On the mountain-top, where you can see everything, there should be no desire, but there is.

#21: How coming down?

Roshi: Coming down will be your desire. You cannot, you should not, you cannot stay even on top of mountain. That is not fair. So to come down is the most important practice actually. That is so-called form is emptiness and emptiness is form. Up and down, back and forth, while you are doing this, as if you are every week coming to Tassajara and going back to San Francisco. Back and forth, while you are doing your way, your practice will be matured enough.

#21: I am deeply grateful.

Question 22 (Ed Brown): I don't understand what I have done.

Roshi: Because you want to understand, when you doing your **[may be missing a sentence or two]** ... why is it necessary to understand what you are doing? Buddha knows. At least I know, and people know. When you bow to zendo, when everything is ready, everyone knows. So find out what you are doing moment after moment, for instance, when you bow to me, when you bow to zendo, when you hear the bubbling sound of the rice. There you will find out yourself. That is call your name, address to yourself.

#22: Thank you very much.

Question 23 (Male): As summer follows spring, and fall comes after, we see the wheel of karma turning within us, how can we come to know subjectively the Buddha's way of stopping that wheel?

Roshi: When you hear the sound of the river and sound of the falling leaves as a Buddha's sound, you can--you have already stopped your karma, subjectively and objectively, because originally the karma itself is Buddha's way.

#23: I am sincerely thankful.

Question 24: A definition, Roshi. I would like to answer your question before I ask mine. You say, *Prajñāpāramitā*, same as zazen and same as Buddha's bowl or Buddha's head. Emptiness is form, form is emptiness. Now I'd like to ask my question. If we live in suffering, for to live is to suffer, and we seek Buddha nature, or

Buddhahood to end reincarnation of suffering, Buddha is emptiness, the Bodhisattva suffers just a little more. Why must we seek the absolute?

Roshi: We--understanding what we seek for the absolute is opposite. Absolute reveal itself as form. When we try to seek for the absolute, that absolute is not true absolute because the absolute cannot be object of training--of practice. If it is object of our training, that is not absolute any more. So the only way, only approach to the absolute is through form. That is Bodhisattva. Through Bodhisattva's practice, the absolute will reveal itself, and absolute will be on the back of Bodhisattva. So Bodhisattva is form, and Bodhisattva is--although it is absolute, but when Bodhisattva act as Bodhisattva, he is also Buddha. So actually Bodhisattva and the Buddha is no different. But whenever we do something, that is form and that is Bodhisattva. That maybe some other Buddha. So there is no need to seek for it.

#24: I am deeply grateful.

Question 25 (Male): I want to say something, but I have nothing to say, still I am saying something.

Roshi: When you want to say something, when you are finding out what to say, there is--that is enough. Actually whatever you say, that will not be enough.

#25: That is my feeling. Thank you very much.

Roshi: As I said this afternoon in my lecture, the second master of my temple in Japan was studying Zuigan's addressing his own name for six years it was not enough. After he found out the truth of addressing himself is addressing to the Buddha nature, addressing to our Shākyamuni Buddha, the true practice started in my temple. Sometimes many students, sometimes quite few students, but that practice incessantly continues so far. But his practice will continue forever and pervade whole world, whole universe, because this is the truth how everything exists in each world and each world without any contradiction or disturbance exists at the same time in the same way. As I believe in this truth, I am here now in Tassajara, and practicing our way with you. This is not Japanese way or

This transcript is a retyping of the existing City Center transcript. It is not verbatim. It was entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997. The tape is not available. Reformatted by Bill Redican 10/26/01.