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This lecture was the source for the chapter of *Not Always So* called "Not Always So" on p. 95.

In Buddhist scripture there is a famous story. Water is same, but water for human being, is water [laughs], and for celestial being it is a jewel. And for fish it is their home. And for people in hell or hungry ghosts it is blood or maybe fire. If they want to drink it, the water changes into fire. So they cannot drink it [laughs].

Same water [laughs, laughter] looks like very different. But you may say, our understanding of water is right. It should not be "home" or "house" or "jewel" or "blood" or "fire." It should not be so. Water should be water.

But Dōgen-zenji says: "Even though you say 'water is water,' it is not quite right." [Laughs.] It is not right. I think most people think water should be water, and that is right understanding of water. "It cannot be anything else. Water is something to drink [laughs], not to live in it." Or, "It cannot be fire." But he says that is not quite right. He doesn't say it is wrong, but he says, "Not quite right."

I think we practice zazen, and this is right practice, and the attainment we will acquire is something right and perfect. But if you ask Dōgen-zenji, he may say, "Not quite." [Laughs.] This is, maybe, a good *kōan* for you to work on for the remainder of the *sesshin*.

I don't know how to explain—or how to explain why the answer "Water is water" is not quite right. At least not much different if you say—if human beings say "Water is water," it's not much difference from to say "Water is fire or blood or jewel." Not much difference. Don't you think so?

For angels, it may be actually a jewel. And they may like it because it is beautiful. But we like it because it is cool—nice and cool and not tasty, but it helps our thirst. If so, to say "Water is jewel," there is some reason. And to say "Water is water" is also some reason. Not much difference. Buddhists have been explaining this point in various ways. For instance, teaching of selflessness, or teaching of interdependency—those teachings, or teaching of emptiness. There are many teachings which will intellectually explain why the answer "Water is water" is not perfect.

When we say "Water is water," we understand substantially, here is water. But we say water is maybe H₂O [laughs]. This may not be actually water. So under some condition, H₂O became liquid. But under some condition it may be a vapor. So you cannot say "This is water," because water is not constant. So it is changing, and because it exists under some condition, it is something which exists with the rules of interdependency or rules of causality. So because of some reason, some cause, water just tentatively became water, that's all. So we cannot say "Water is water."

Tentatively, for convenience sake, you can say "Water is water." But it is not always so. You may understand in this way. But when Dōgen-zenji says that is not complete answer, we should actually appreciate the water in its true sense. Water is something more than just water. It should not be a kind of drink—one of the many liquors.

When we drink water, water is everything to me. And the whole world is water. Nothing exists besides water for me. When we drink water with this understanding and attitude, that is water, but that is, at the same time, it is more than water. So he says: "'Water is water,' that's right. But not quite."

This explains what is *shikantaza*. We say "just sit." "Just water" is like water. We should just sit. Or to "settle ourselves on ourselves." It means to become ourselves. We should not be something else. We should be just ourselves. And when we become just ourselves, "we" cover everything, "we" include everything. There is nothing else but you. That is *shikantaza*.

So by practice what we acquire is ourselves. To become ourselves, completely ourselves, we practice zazen. That is *shikantaza*. We have everything. We are fully satisfied with ourselves. And there is nothing to gain or nothing to attain. This is maybe very verbal [laughs] interpretation of true practice. Anyway, this kind of gratitude or joyful mind we must have in our practice.

I think I understand why you practice zazen. But I think most of you are trying to seek for something—something true, something real because the world is too much unrealistic, and too many things are told. And we hear too many things which we cannot accept or believe in. So I think you seek for something true and real. And you don't seek for even something beautiful. Something beautiful is not—to you, I think, is not true or real. It looks beautiful [laughs], but actually you don't think that is really beautiful. It is just the look of something. It is just ornament for someone who is not honest enough.

So justice doesn't mean anything, or beauty doesn't mean so much to you. Or some virtue doesn't mean so much—virtuous person. Mostly,

maybe—I forgot the word—hypocrite. I think you feel in that way because so many beautiful things—so many things were told something like "true." And so many virtuous persons appeared but who didn't convey to you real gratitude. You couldn't trust him.

So what is real to you is big problem, I think, for you. What is real? [Laughs.] What do you know—you don't know. You don't have any person to trust, or any teaching to believe in to follow. I think that most people nowadays have inner idea—in our mind—and this kind of feeling is universal feeling for many people.

That is why, I think, you came to Zen Center. Real reason is—that is the reason. But, even though you came here [laughs], I myself don't believe any special thing [laughter]. I don't say "the water is water" or "water is jewel or blood or house or"—I don't say so. But really, according to Dōgen-zenji, water is something more than that. We stick to righteousness or beauty or virtue, but there is something more than that.

So I don't feel so bad even though you seek for something. First of all I will tell you, it is not appropriate or it is not wise to seek for something like that. I noticed that you like trip very much [laughs]. Today Alaska, next day, India [laughs, laughter] and Tibet. I don't think that is wise too. You are seeking for something—blood or jewel or something like that. But because we come to the time when we cannot believe in those things, we should change our way in seeking the truth. We have to change our way of trip. Instead of going to moon [laughs], you must make some other trip. I don't mean acid trip [laughs, laughter]. We have to change our way of trip. That is what Dōgen-zenji suggested. The trip he meant is something different.

Yesterday I talked about freedom. Real freedom is to feel freedom wearing a robe—this kind of troublesome robe. Instead of being bothered by this busy life, we should wear this civilization without being bothered by it, without ignoring it, without being caught by it. So without going somewhere, without escaping it, we should have composure in this busy life. You shouldn't laugh at people who are engaged in busy activity. We shouldn't laugh at them. But we shouldn't follow them. As Ummon¹ says: "Follow wave and drive wave. Follow the wave and drive the wave." It means that, to follow the wave, and actually you should drive the wave.

Or Dōgen-zenji says: "We should be like a boatman." A boatman is on the boat, but actually a boatman is carried by boat. But actually boatman is handling [laughs] the boat. This is how we live in this world. If I explain in this way, you feel as if you understood how [laughs] you live in this difficult world. But actually, even though you understand

¹ Yunmen Wenyan (Ummon Bun'en): 864-949. Chan master of Tang China.

how, like boatman, but it does not mean you are able to do it [laughs]. To do it is very difficult. That is actually why you practice zazen.

Yesterday I said, "However painful your legs are, you shouldn't move." Maybe some people understood in that way. But I talked about the confidence or determination to practice zazen should be like that, but there is no need for you to do it literally [laughs]. If it is too painful, I think you can change your posture [laughs, laughter]. But your determination should be like that—and should be also. When I say "should be"—that is a good example, but it is not necessary to be so always.

When I say something, you understand—like a "fish" or like an "angel"—you understand it literally and rigidly. "This is house, our house. This is WATER," [thumps table for emphasis at each word—especially at "WATER"], forgetting all about how human being feels. So even though you live in water like a fish, you should know: "This is, for human being, something to drink. So we should be very careful not to be drunk by human being, like a small fish." [Laughs.] This kind of consideration is necessary. That means to have freedom from everything.

The secret of Sōtō Zen is just two words: "Not always so." Oh—three words [laughs, laughter] in English. In Japanese, two words. "Not always so." This is secret of the teaching. If you understand things in that way—you don't ignore. "It may be so, but it is not always so." If you understand things in that way, and without being caught by words or rules, without too much pre-conceived idea, we should actually do something, and doing something, you should apply your teaching. Then the teaching, which was told by our ancient masters, will help.

Actually, to take something rigidly is laziness [laughs], because you want to understand it before you do something difficult [laughs]. So you are caught by some words. But if you are brave enough to accept your surroundings without saying which is right or wrong, then a teaching which was told to you will help.

If you are caught by teaching, you will have double problem: whether you should follow this teaching or whether you should go your own way. This problem is created by the teachings which were told.

So practice first, and apply teaching. Then teaching will help you. To seek for some good teaching like Buddhism [laughs] is to seek for something good anyway. Whatever it may be is the "sightseeing people" [laughs]. Even though you don't take a trip by car, but spiritually you are making sightseeing: "Oh, beautiful teaching! [Laughs, laughter.] This may be true teaching!"

We say *yusan-gansui*.² *Yusan* means "with playful mind, to go to mountain or to go to river or ocean"—someplace where you can enjoy the view of things. *Yusan-gansui*. This is the danger for Zen practice. *Yusan-gansui*. Be careful so that you may not be involved in practice of *yusan-gansui*. It doesn't help at all [laughs]. It doesn't help. If you have right understanding of yourself and right understanding of practice, then *yusan-gansui* will help. But if you don't know the actual way of practice directly, whatever you study doesn't help at all.

Or we say: "You shouldn't be fooled by things." Foiled by things: Fooled by something beautiful. Fooled by something which looks like it is true [laughs]. Don't be involved in playing games. This is also what Dōgen-zenji suggested. You should trust Buddha, trust the dharma, and trust the sangha in its true sense because those are ultimate goals you will reach anyway. You shouldn't be fooled by things.

So we should practice zazen like someone who is almost dying. For him there is nothing to rely on, nothing to depend on. When you reach this kind of situation, you will not be fooled by anything because you don't want anything, because you are dying. Money [laughs] or wife? No [laughs]. No more wife, no more children. You cannot be fooled by anything. But you may still want to know who you are, without being fooled by anything. That is why we put emphasis on the feeling of the evanescence of life, so that you may not be fooled by anything.

But most people are not only always fooled by something, but fooled by himself [laughs]. Very silly. Fooled by himself. When you are fooled by something else, the damage will not be so big. But when you are fooled by yourself [laughs], it's fatal. No more medicine [laughs].

I think we should know whether we are fooled by ourselves or not. Here there are many students, but I think most of you are fooled by yourself [laughs]. Most of you are fooled by yourself: by your ability, by your beauty, or by your ability, by your confidence, and by your looks. It is all right to feel some resistance to this kind of way of life, but we should not be lost in fight [laughs], in resistance. Do you understand? If you are deeply involved in resistance or fight, you will lose yourself. As you are human being, not so strong and very emotional—you have not much reason. You will be easily lost. Even though you are young, you will be lost. You will lose your strength and you will lose your friend, lose your parents. You will lose everything. And you will feel lonely. And what will you do?

You lose the brightness of your eyes. You lose your confidence. [Laughs.] You are dead body. And no one will say, "Oh, I am sorry." No

² *yusan* (sight-seeing); *-gan* (play); *sui* (water). Figuratively, "Go to the mountains and enjoy the sights; go to the water and play (i.e., do both sides)."

one say so [laughs]. Actually many people are lost, I think. Look at your face in the mirror—see if you are still alive or not.

If you don't change this sightseeing practice, even though you practice zazen, it doesn't help at all. Do you understand? It doesn't help.

We have two days more, so let's practice hard, while we are still little bit alive.

Thank you very much.

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