

67-12-01.B [67-12-01-A]

12-1-67 (evening)
Z.M.C. sesshin
(edited by Brian F.)

In this morning's lecture I said our practice should be concentrated on the sitting form, in your *hara* or *tanden*. This is not just a technique of practice; the underlying idea goes very deep. Our zazen practice should not be compared with any other practice or training. It is not always a mistake to think that Zen is something better or superior to other teachings, but there is a reason why we should not compare our practice to the various other kinds of practice.

Dogen Zenji recommends zazen practice to every one of us who comes to a zazen hall. To become a good student, as he said, everyone must first of all understand that whatever we do is zazen. There is not some special training better than others or a certain way of practice. Whatever you do is zazen, actually. At least when you're doing it, it is Zen. But your understanding of your everyday activity is lost because, misunderstanding your practice, you become attached to daily activity. Your activity is not always Zen for you. But that actually is Zen. Whatever you do, that is Zen. But for you, always for you, when you do something for others or for yourself, it's not Zen if you spoil your practice with your attachments, with your various ideas, or by comparing your practice to someone else's practice. When you practice, when you do something, at least at that time that is Zen practice. So as Dogen Zenji says, there is actually no particular enlightenment to be attained merely by means of some practice, because whatever you do is zazen. If this is so, to attain enlightenment is also true practice.

You should know why you spoil your practice and how we are able to practice our way without spoiling it. We say we cannot attain enlightenment by means of our interpretation of zazen or any other kind of teaching. Only practicing your way without spoiling it is true practice.

You may think, if we're talking this way, that there is no connection between Zen practice and what you heard me say this morning. But actually this true practice is concentrated in your *hara*, in your tummy. It is quite simple to put your selves, your power, in your tummy, because actually, if you have your strength in your *tanden*, you will have deep broad lungs in which you can accept things, whatever they are. And your lungs will be so broad and so deep that nothing can move you, nothing can disturb you.

If it is (the sound of) water in the creek, it is still open. You cannot disturb it even though the water makes a very loud sound. It doesn't make any sound. Even in absolute openness, above in the sky where the airplane is, it is just calm water. You cannot do anything with it. This is the kind of mind you will have if you put strength in your tummy. You have to try. I advise you to put strength in your tummy or *tanden*.

When you have pain in your legs, you will wonder what would happen if there were more. Nothing happens! Because you use your mind, the pain will do something with your practice. But if you have deep, broad power in your tummy, nothing can be done with your practice, and nothing will happen to you. Some people who sit for the first time in this calm state will be afraid of the calmness. Your mind is so calm and the surroundings are so calm. That feeling you have is a quite an unusual one, so some may become afraid of it. But nothing will happen.

Originally, even when you died in our practice, it was believed that you were going to your original home.

After this, when you go, you will return to your original home from which you came. But nothing will happen to you! It's alright, quite alright. The reason you become afraid of it is that you do not possess Big Mind. Even though you become afraid of it, nothing will happen to you. Why are you afraid of it? Why do you think you have gone? You're here, right here! Everyone makes this mistake, but for a time you will say, "Oh, I'm not like that." But nothing will happen. Even if you have great fear, actually nothing will happen. You may think, "If I try my best, what will happen to this world?" But nothing will happen to this world. Even though you may think your heart has gone, nothing will happen, nothing whatsoever happens.

You may say my talk has nothing to do with our practice, with our life, but it is not so. Because you do not possess Big Mind, whatever you do does not make any sense. If you want to do something pure and right, you will fix your mind, so it is an imperturbable mind which does not move back and forth, right and left. Only in this condition can you do something which makes some sense.

So we say that we don't practice our way for the sake of ourselves or others. We practice our way for the sake of our way. There's no other reason why we practice our way. We just want to go back to our home as a duck wants to return to the water, like a traveller who comes back and lies down in his own bed. With this idea, we practice our way. And when we do something, we do it just for the sake of the activity, without any gaining ideas, without wondering about the meaning of the activity. This is why we practice. Thinking about what we are doing is already not true practice. The only way is activity. Since this is so, there's no other way to understand what you're doing except just to sit.

When you read something, you read something. But that kind of activity, if you do it with some plan or idea, cannot be compared to the true practice of zazen. The true meaning or reason you practice is not because zazen practice gives you various advantages or power. If you practice our way, you'll become more and more clear, your mind will become calm, and you'll become certain. Many people are practicing zazen for that reason. But that is not true zazen. As we say, the form may be zazen, but the reason they practice is not. You can practice our way with various ideas too, but this particular point must not be forgotten.

It's true -- you start to wander about, going round and round looking for something, because you do not know the meaning of everyday activity. You are going round and round, searching for something better.

There is a translation of the *Fukanzazengi* by Dogen Zenji. He worked on it for thirty years, starting right after he came back from China. It is a commentary on rules for sitting:

"The true way is universal, so why are training and enlightenment different? Also, the supreme teaching is everywhere, so what is the need for zazen practice? If the truth is clearly apart from the dust, why do we use a cloth to wipe it away? The truth is not apart from here, so means of training are useless.

"But if there is even the slightest gap (i.e. doubt or difference between the two), the separation is very far apart. If opposites arise, (i.e. if dualistic thoughts arise), you lose the Buddha-mind.

"Even though you are proud of your understanding and have got enlightenment, even if you gain some wisdom and wander very far and find the way, even though you have power to touch things, even though you enter into the area of enlightenment, you have almost lost the hidden way to enlightenment or samadhi."

You are the Buddha. Though born with Dogen's wisdom, you'll have to seek for fifty years. "Look at Buddha, or Bodhidharma, who thought he had the Buddha mind after six or nine years. But think of this six

to nine years of wall-gazing." Eko (?) had been sitting since he was nine years old. The oldest sages were these Zen people.

"There's no reason why modern man cannot understand if he sits for a while and just trusts in himself. Naturally the Buddha mind arises. But if you want it, you must start today, quickly!"

This is the first lesson of the book Dogen spent thirty years writing. The reason he wrote this and his other teachings (some six hundred pages) was to transmit the true way of practice. So he studied and studied even after he attained enlightenment. That is why Eko would just sit for so long.

So you should not think that you are sitting in the bottom of the Tassajara valley for seven days. If you are cold, how would you feel about quitting your sitting and climbing up to the top of the mountain to see something from there? What kind of thing would you have? And this morning it may have been winter cold when you were eating. What kind of cereal did you have? Some people, you know, bathe themselves in cold water to enjoy the warmth in winter. You have hot springs! But the baths in the winter in its true sense doesn't mean to be like animals or like birds. When you see some of Tassajara mountain, is it bare? Covered with white snow?

If you want to go back to the winter, you should go back to the rock on the top of the mountain. That is much better than to be a bird in flight yourself, or even than to be running. Be a rock! And sit forever! Without being moved by rain or snow or storm. Whether wind or rain or snow--that is firmness. You may say that is just a rock. But whatever it is, in its truest sense, it is so. When you practice zazen sitting in the *tanden*, it is to realize what is true practice and what is not.

EZT – early SFZC transcript - 67-12-01-A
