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SUZUKI-ROSHI LECTURE

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Our practice should be based on the idea of selflessness. This selflessness is very difficult to understand. If you try to be selfless, that is already selfish idea. We don't know what to do, how to cope with it. Perhaps you may...you must have tried various way, but selflessness is not something which you can try. Selflessness should be there when you do not try anything. Selflessness is not something which you can be aware of. But for us, we have to...it is necessary to try and to know how difficult it is. And because it is difficult, you want some guidance or teacher. Maybe when you have good teacher and when you are practicing with good teacher, you will be naturally not so selfish.

Why our teacher is so hard on us is because of our selfish attitude. Whenever he sees our selfish attitude he may point out...or he maybe angry with it, usually. For instance, when I was a little boy...I was going primary school at that time, grammar school. And I learned something about animal, you know. Small animal like some animal which lives on fish body. When we were working in the pond to clean the water from the muddy mud and worm in it, I picked up a small goldfish and found a small worm on the body. So that was the worm I studied in grammar school. So I pointed at the worm and said: This is (in Japanese) *Mijinko*. This is *Mijinko*. Maybe I proudly pointed out the *Mijinko*. And my teacher said: "Shut up!"

I didn't know why he shout at me, but now I know why he was so angry with me. To encourage student by showing some example is the mercy, but to shout at me when we proudly showing...that is another mercy, another kindness. So whatever we do, he is watching us to see whether we are selfish or not.

We small disciples would eat anything he wants, you know. Then guests come, if he has good Japanese cake, he would put...he would hide it from us, you know, because we eat always what he want to use. Whatever it is, as soon as we found out, we would eat it. At first, you know, we have not much...at first we cut a corner which ...(tiny) in the box, like this. And we would cut just a slice of it, four corners. And next time a little bit more. Until it is obvious we cut it. So when we realized that anyway he may find out what we did, we cut and divided between us. But when we divide the cake and eat it, he was not so angry. But when he thinks someone ate it all by himself he became very angry.

Once he put a persimmon, big persimmon, bitter, in the rice, so that it would be ripened. But someone, it was just one, someone ate it, you know. But I didn't know that when I...and my master thought we must have eat it. So he asked me who ate the persimmon. Because I didn't know who did it I said, "No, I didn't." He became very angry, not with me, but someone who ate it by himself, without sharing it, sharing it

among us. And as soon as he found out who did it he was very angry, and you now, I became sorry for him, to say that I didn't eat it.

Any kind of selfish, selfishness is strictly observed by our teacher. Selfish attitudes creates arrogance you know; arrogant...arrogant attitude based on selfish idea. Because he is selfish he becomes arrogant. So this arrogance is strictly observed by our teacher. This arrogance is sometimes...when it is positive it is easy to find out, but negative arrogance is rather difficult to see or to know. The negative arrogance is the arrogance when you say, "No, I cannot do that." But it means...what I mean by "I can do it" is to do it perfect. Better. So he may say, "I cannot do it but you do it." He may say. And if he cannot do it as he expected, he may, you know, express arrogance. "He said he can do it, but look at it. Look at it, what he did." That is arrogance.

So in Zen School we put emphasis on self-power; to do it ourselves. And Pure Land way is: we are originally sinful being. But teachers of Pure Land School strictly pointed out that kind of arrogance "I cannot do it. I am sinful!" You know, if you misunderstand, if your understanding is not close enough..."I am one of it. Everyone is sinful." That is most of the time...most of the time it is arrogance, the negative arrogance.

It is better, much better to say: "Although now I am sinful, we can, by practice we must conquer it." That is more, you know, faithful to the sinful nature of ourselves. Sometimes, not always. So it is not matter of what you say or how you, even, behave. When you reach this point you will point out the real practice of repeating Amida Buddha's name, or practicing zazen.

There is no other way than to repeat, just repeat Amida Buddha's name without any reason. There is no other way to sit. Without any gaining idea. So before you have this kind of struggle, you may wonder why we say you have to sit without any gaining idea. After you try various ways to be free from selfish idea, then I think you will find yourself in the position where you will sit, just SIT.

We say conscience, but that conscience mostly based on selfish idea. Real conscience is more than the verbal things. More than you can think about or more than you can feel. Until you are...only when you are every strict with yourself, that real conscience will appear. In other words, as long as you are seeking for something, some truth or some way or some understanding from outside, you will not find out what it is. Only when you are strict with yourself you will find out what is needed for you.

So instead of being attached to some verbal thing or something you can hear or see, you must feel impulse from inside which support everything, every phenomenal world. And to be grateful for the life energy from inside, which support everything. That is Buddha Nature. And maybe that is Amida Buddha's Mercy.

But usually, when you have selfish practice, you stick to something which you can see, which you can understand. When you stick to something which you can understand, you will forget all about what is supporting the understanding: the color you

see or the beautiful shape it has. So instead of being one with the flower, your friend or your teacher, you will stick to, you will be caught by your teacher, the flower you see, the friend you have, without direct...without having direct, intimate relationship. You will make some veil between you, and what you will see is dead flower or wooden teacher.

So in short, the best way is to get up when people get up; to eat whatever it is, when you friend eat; and to sleep where our friend sleep. To behave like other students behave, without any reason. That is, in short, the best way. That is *shikan taza* in everyday life. If you are not able to do that, you don't know what is zazen. In your zazen, every sound comes but you do not think about it. You do not discriminate it, you just hear it. So in our monastic life, you should be able to do whatever it is; whoever it is, your teacher is teacher, you know. That is the only way to get rid of your selfish practice. You should forget all about why or how, even. You should, whether it is creative activity or imitation; it doesn't matter.

If you become too fussy about things, you may lose your practice. So I don't like to discuss something too much. You will be lost in your discussion. It will take night after night, day by day, and you will not have any conclusion. The last thing you will do is to decide by vote. Discussion is necessary if you understand the fundamental attitude or fundamental practice of selflessness, then discussion is very useful. But when you are caught by some idea, some way to solve the problem, you cannot solve the problem. Because no way can be perfect. It will create some other problem, whatever you do. So when you know that whatever we do in term of good or bad, right or wrong is not perfect, then, tentatively, you can choose some way. That is, in other words, selflessness. You do not force anything. tentatively: "Let's do this way." That's all, you know.

Religion is, after all, for ourselves. each one of ourselves. If so, it is necessary to observe our way as a personal practice and independent effort. And when you get through the superficial activity, you will find out some universal thing within yourself. That is a kind of mystery. When you think...when you can accept completely the things which people may accent--the truth which is the truth for us, was the truth for even Sakyamuni Buddha--there's no difference. Whatever it is which is true with us is true with our ancestors, and maybe with our descendants, too.

As we are...as we are practicing our way with so many people, of course we are busy to organize our practice. But we should not forget our personal practice.

Thank you very much.

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