

70-05-02-A

ON BREATHING

May 2, 1970. San Francisco.

Right now your feelings have changed from the feeling you had in your sitting. This is important. When you start to _____ sesshin you think "I must sit two days continuously" but that is not...the way you should practice. If you think in that way you may feel-you maybe very much discouraged-"Oh my, I have to sit two days!"-"or three days!" It is actually...better to sit one period after one period-"OK, I will sit one period." Then after *kinhin* you must say to yourself "I must sit one more period." And then, you know, you start *kinhin* and after *kinhin* you sit one more period. In that way, if you practice zazen, you don't feel so bad. I think-if I think so...you may say "you are fooling me" but actually it is not so. That is how things is going always. And so, you know, according to our teaching time is like...like a...circle of fire. This is, you know...here there is burned place. This is actually-time is going. It looks like one red circle, but...it is-actually it is the continuation of each fire. It looks like so. That is famous parable.

Usually you understand time sometime continual, from past to future. But actually it is successive, continuous-continuation of events _____. One after another events takes place. So it...one after another it takes place-it takes place you naturally think there is something-there is some, something like time which is always continuing-continuously exists or you have idea of some line which, you now, from past to future, but this is just abstract idea from each event. So actually what is taking place is each event now-you are sitting. Moment after moment you are sitting. One period after another period you are sitting. So even indulge into this kind of continuity of time you become lazy and you cannot practice-you cannot put your effort fully on each moment.

When we say this kind of practice-*zenmo saidan* (?-_____is to cut, _____is before and *go* is after-before and after. Should be cut, should be separated. If this is _____. If you drink wine-always...before each meal you will be always drunk! That is not our practice. Our practice should be practice piece by piece, not always like, we say in Japanese we say...(laughs)...do you know-a horse sometimes, horse is, horse, you know, how do you say-horse is _start to (laughs)...I don't know what you say! It comes out...it doesn't stop for pretty long time. We say "don't do it like a horse." That is not your practice. If you practice two day sesshin like a horse maybe that is worse than horse. So, you know, each period you should renew your practice. Sometimes you may drink, but sometimes you should be able to stop it. If you cannot stop it that is bad practice.

I Japan we keep wine-I cannot pronounce that word-that is very difficult word for me to pronounce. If you take continuously wine that is...we say "wet ball." Wet ball is not our practice. Sometime our body should be very dry-from wine. If you-even though you take maybe a lot of wine, if you take it once in a while we say that is the medicine of all

medicine, we say. Medicine of hundred medicines, we say. If you take once in a while, so our practice should be-although we practice zazen everyday, we should renew our practice day by day, one after another. So even-in one practice it is good to check your practice. As Tatsugami Roshi says about your master-"Hai." How about your ears and shoulders-"Hai." How about your neck?- "Hai." In that way you can renew your practice.

Before your practice-when your practice is not so good, it is better to check your practice maybe several times in one period. But when your practice make it pretty good there is not-not necessary to check, so...Breathing, breathing is very important for you, but if you want to have good breathing, you have to have good posture. And when you have good posture, you should understand how you take good breathing.

Tonight I want to explain how we take good breathing. Why your posture is important for your right breathing or good breathing is-you need, you know,-usually you know your breathing is going like this. And it doesn't meet here and you haven't-you haven't a feeling muscle here around your waist. And the good breathing-when-good breathing means to have deeper breathing., usual breathing. Deeper one is-must go from here deeper to your tummy. It should reach your...And from here to here, actually you have nothing to exhale anymore. Your lung is empty, but your muscles is, you know, will work, with some feeling and actually your diaphragm is pressing everything down a little bit, just to make way for your inhaling. So although you have nothing to inhale, you are making, you are preparing for your next inhaling. Actually I don't know-if my explanation is physiologically right or wrong. this is my feeling. When you do so you will have deep calm feeling, but if you take inhaling and exhaling like this-just like this-you will have no chance to, to have deep calm empty feeling. So one after another, your feeling will be replaced by holding your breathing. You stop...actually you stop your exhaling and hold a little while and inhale. And when you start this-as someone, I think that was Sekita. Do you know Sekita? Some Japanese priest who is teaching at Hawaii. He...in Diamond Sangha-what was the..no, Diamond Sangha, yeah. He explained exhaling this way. This is interesting. So he, sometime especially for beginner it is difficult to exhale smoothly, you know, from the beginning to end. So if you, you know, do this way,-this is easy actually. I think that is interesting. I think you can-you maytry that one, but if possible, do it smoothly. Like this-not like this, but this great help, he suggested-he was suggesting exhaling this way. Anyway, inhaling is-if your exhaling is complete, inhaling is not so difficult, just do it natural and exhale.

One Zen Master said-your breathing could be three times a minute. it is pretty long. But how you do it is to have deep exhaling and because your mind is calm and your physical activity is not so, you know, fast so that kind of slow breathing will be sufficient.

The pain in your legs is almost continuously calm, but if you have this kind of practice, this kind of technique-not technique, but practice...by this kind of practice you can endure the pain. The only way you can endure your pain is to...forget. Let it be painful. That is the only way. If you are painful that is not-even though you are painful that is not my problem. (laughs) So be painful if you like. How you have this kind of feeling is to have good breathing. To have calm, calmness of your mind. So when-if you

are completely concentrated in your perfect breathing you will not be bothered by anything. But...it may take time. Before you, you know, before you can apply this kind of technique when your painful (tape turned, some lost)...it maybe the pain is _____, it is how you endure it is to build up right practice, but usually when you become painful you have to move-you start to move your legs, that will not help. So to, you know, to fix your posture and pain does not go this way. It goes up and down and up and down, so there is nothing, there is no need to worry about it. It will naturally come down, although it may go up again! Or it will not harm your legs. This is the problem everyone has, even Japanese people have this problem of pain. I think when Japanese people have more, maybe, pain because our legs are short, so this is ...yours is long so so on your ankle it is not so...the angle is better. Our legs are short, so angle is sharp, so pain we have here is worse I think. More problem-in zazen more problem to, you know, this way no problem, but problem we have is this way. That is why it is so painful and here. you know, we have pain, so if legs are short the pressure we have here is more, more pressure we have here we twist, we have to twist our legs more like this because of short leg. And someone may think it will stop your circulation. I don't think that is true. Ahh...if you have...if your friend is a doctor please ask him why this doesn't, doesn't circulate much-by crossing our legs this way. I don't know why but it doesn't,-stop our circulation so much.

This is also true in our everyday life, but, you know, this kind of-maybe-quality is also true but we Zen students does not try to understand our everyday life psychologically or applying this kind of (therapy) in our everyday life, on our everyday life, but we rather extend this kind of feeling which we have in our practice. So without thinking or without trying to extend our experience to everyday life naturally we should be able to organize our everyday life and we have to acquire some-a kind of character so that you can...always act properly, think properly. Observe properly. Why we cannot observe properly is because we have a kind of, you know, "habit" of life, you know, we are always, each person is always repeating same habitual way over and over. it is very hard for each-for him to change his way. Even though you know what you are doing it is difficult to change it. So best thing is without working on your worse point, instead of working on your painful difficult point, to adjust your way by practice of Zen. So if you adjust your way of life in zendo-in your everyday life there is no need, not much need, to try to correct your way or try to adjust your way because you can do it without thinking. Without being concerned so much about it.

No Zen Master, you know, almost all the, maybe, famous Zen Master is-are the people who had very bad habit when he was young. It is amazing to find out-you see a picture of a famous Zen Master when he was young you will be amazed. You can see by the picture how bad tempered he was or how stubborn he was, you can see, you know, just by glance of his-"Oh!" But it is almost impossible to believe that he was his teacher when he was young. Of course, you know, it took many, many years it be a Zen Master, but that is (personal). I think that is great encouragement. I was very short tempered, very short tempered when I was young. I know how...(intelligent) I was when I was young, but people said "he was the most patient." I feel very funny when they said "he was the most patient." I immediately want to say "No!" But it was-it was good

feeling, you know, when they admire my patience. "Oh, he is very patient." So I just listen to them.

Zazen practice is, maybe, difficult, but I think it is easiest way to correct your short points-shortcomings. It is almost impossible to correct your shortcomings, but by practice...we can do it. after so many times of repeating our human life we say we-he attained that kind of character. when we talk about great Zen Master, maybe so...but I think when they say so, I think they have some reason. They have some experience of it-to know their former life is a kind of...magical power which only Buddha has. But if you know how, you know, how our practice change character I think you can understand what they actually mean. Maybe, you know, if you try to change your character in...only in this life it is almost impossible. Actually it is not possible, but...zazen practice will change your character completely. This is a kind of magic you now even though I don't know my past life, but I know, I know this life, and how I change from my childhood life to my life which I have now. whether your practice is good or bad if you sit...I am sure you will change. Old student who have been sitting for many years, know this fact and feel the change which our students make. Whatever it is, without having big ambition, just to sit is enough. Don't be involved in hasty idea-"I have been sitting for seven years, but nothing happens" you may (say?) but a great thing happen already. That he sit for three years means there is,,that is already big change and he doesn't' give up the sitting, but he complains that's all. It's a good thing sometimes to complain.

Thank you very much.

EZT – early SFZC transcript – 70-05-02-A
