

to increase the volume, since our policy is to keep prices on a par with the nearby large supermarket.

Right now, Tassajara bread is the hottest item—literally, since it often reaches the store still hot from the oven—but customers are also very pleased with the fresh vegetables, picked early in the morning at the Farm and trucked directly to the store.

AWAKENING THE WILL-BODY

Sesshin Lecture by Zentatsu Baker-roshi

Suzuki-roshi felt that Buddhism needed some fresh opportunity, some place where people's minds weren't made up about Buddhism. So when he had finished his first stages of training, he asked his teacher if he could go to America. His teacher said no, so he asked if he could go to Hokkaido. Hokkaido is rather like the Japanese frontier; it was only really settled in the last century. His teacher got very angry, so Suzuki-roshi had to stay. But he never gave up his idea of coming to America.

When he did come here he felt he had not studied widely enough for us, and at the same time he felt he had come to America too late, and too old. But he was convinced his successors would do it, would find a way to study Buddhism more widely, more freely. So he instructed us to do this, and how to do this. First of all he emphasized our posture, our yogic posture, because Zen is the school of Buddhism which emphasizes yoga, the body itself.

We don't use many aids, many rituals. Our own body is our vajra. So Zen, because of this emphasis, has to start with the body. Because it doesn't use anything else, you start with what you have. We experience some divided nature from childhood, some suffering divided nature. We have two parents and various ways of looking at things. So you have to begin your practice with your various parts agreeing on something, finding how your mind and body can come to some agreement. So we have zazen. It's the feeling of "Let's sit down and see what happens."

So Buddhism projects or creates, invents, various provisional ways of practice. We could say body-only, which is yoga or posture; or mind-only, which is the Yogacara school, the Lankavatara Sutra; and emptiness, which is the Madhyamika school, Nagarjuna, the Prajna Paramita literature; and then the attempt to put that all together in Tendai, Hua-yen, and Zen Buddhism.

Now we are doing a sesshin here at Green Gulch. And if you're going to practice with your body, you of course have to trust it. You have to give up your ideas of it as being separate from you. As I have said, for example, the idea or feeling of your foot being "way down there." We have many such images of our body, mistaken images; we have to find out what they are.

The vehicle of the Tathagata can be characterized by many aspects. But what I am emphasizing now is—no perception of a separate reality behind what you see. This has several aspects. One is that there's no ultimate reality—everything is illusion—and also that reality is not repeatable, there's no way to imitate it, there's no semblance of it. Second, we have an immediate perception of truth in ourself. This means Buddha's own will, or Buddha's Will-Body. Why this is so I'll try to make clearer during this sesshin. And third is—infinite worlds. It extends everywhere, it is not graspable.

Many of our Western ideas emphasize our body as something dead, some mechanical thing. We think we can cut chunks of it off and it won't affect us, or that it can be synthesized. And there is a deep interest in living forever—freezing your body in a vault somewhere, or living forever in heaven, some idea like that. And we have this idea in our own perceptions, in that we don't trust our perceptions. For instance, you don't trust just what you hear. Instead you try to correlate and corroborate what you hear with what you see, smell, taste, touch, et cetera. In other words, you try to average your senses. And then there is further averaging over time, some experimental effort over time, which we call science.

So we think, "I saw that a minute ago, but I don't see it now, so it must have been delusion." Or, "I see this now, and it's still there on my desk tomorrow, so it must be real." But if you saw something on your desk one minute, and the next minute you did not, you'd be convinced it wasn't real, wouldn't you?

I'm talking about the fact that you do have the view that reality is repeatable. And it's our very effort to make reality repeatable which Buddhism calls suffering. Suffering means reality is not repeatable. The result of this is we don't trust our senses. We're always trying to correlate one sense's perception with another sense's perception.

But actually, hearing alone can cover everything. Seeing alone can cover everything. Just feeling can cover everything in an immediate perception of truth. Not while you monitor it and review it and correlate it and corroborate it; just an immediate perception of truth that you trust. Which means you cannot create an outside—inside-outside, over here, over there—which is threatening. If you have some outside thing you create which is threatening, you cannot really practice yoga. You cannot trust that stream of vision and sensation which actually is the path.

Buddhism is not a philosophy or practice derived from the mind; it is the mind and body itself, without any image or identity, without any review of it. This is pretty hard to do. If you have an idea of an outside, and an outside which equals danger, then your senses will always be off base. So one of the aids to penetration, to entering Buddha's Way, Buddha's body, is to see everything as your own mind. To understand everything that comes to you as you, as your

karma, not as some hostile thing. You no longer see any ill will. You develop an even mind toward everyone, which means you know how you feel, are one with how you feel in each circumstance.

So in this sesshin I would like to emphasize an even mind, an even effort. Not strong effort one period and relaxing the next, but some attempt to have an even, steady awareness throughout sitting and kinhin and meals and work and sleeping.

What we fear in our own consciousness, what we call craziness, often are our perceptions which we cannot correlate with anything else. So the emphasis in zazen is to make you strong enough to sustain them. The problem with craziness is usually not that the perception is wrong, but that we're not strong enough to sustain uncorrelated perceptions.

So by our practice of zazen, without any other aids, you become strong enough to accept anything, giving up any idea, any image of your body, of outside and inside, more and more you just accept what comes to you, accept some hearing completely, without reviewing, without thinking—What is it? What can it be? Could I see it? Could I touch it? What kind of shape does it have? Just hearing.

Your hearing can take you, can open you up to so many things, if you just trust your hearing. What you hear just then is enough. You don't have to average it and see if it's going to occur again. In Buddhism our feeling is, only once we'll hear that. Only once we'll see that. By the time you go get your camera, it's different. By the time you try to base your life on it, it's different.

Not averaging the senses, not thinking that we live in a repeatable universe, means that we don't study a particular thing in order to understand that particular thing. In Buddhism we don't study X in order to understand X and then study Y in order to understand Y and then Z in order to understand Z. We study X in order to understand Y and Z. So another assumption in Buddhism we try out by practice is that each one thing is everything, each one thing includes everything. So if you understand man thoroughly, you will understand woman thoroughly, and if you understand woman thoroughly, you will understand man thoroughly. You don't have to understand first man, and then woman, and then something else.

Sesshin is also to settle down with this kind of idea, to try it, to hold it or live it. To practice Buddhism requires an enormous confidence—confidence in yourself and your teacher and Buddha nature, a sense that you can do it. Without that confidence there is always a danger of a deep division in yourself.

So we practice many have-tos. By have-tos I mean the way a mother or father change their baby's diapers because they "have to," not because at a particular moment they want to. You don't say, "Oh boy, am I ever dying to change the diapers." You may enjoy it but your motive is not because you want to or don't want to. Someone must change your baby's diapers, so you change your baby's diapers, that's all.

And we actually need such things. We need such have-tos. People who don't have them have to create them. If you meet people who are, say, very rich, and can have anything they want, you will find they often create a neurotic array of have-tos. And people are always doing this. Alcoholics are creating some

have-to, always putting themselves in some strictness by drinking. These are rules you make for yourself. Crazy people are possessed by "have-tos." If we do not have "have-tos" or cannot accept "have-tos," then we unconsciously make them.

So in Zen we practice with these have-tos which are not in the realm of likes or dislikes. We come to service and chant, not because we like to or dislike to, but because it is a part of this practice, a wisdom of this practice. And if you're practicing with ideas like, "When will I get to like chanting?" you're missing the point. If you get to like chanting too much, we should add something else that is rather a nuisance to do. You should be able to do things without much problem.

By these kinds of strictures or have-tos, we can actually study our desires, actually find, as Suzuki-roshi said, our organic power, our tendencies. Without this kind of have-to in your life, there's no way to plumb your desire and your strength. There's no way to study one thing. We want to study just one thing, just X, until we understand every alphabet. We don't study X for X, we may study Y to understand X. Nangaku-zenji said, "If you want to practice zazen, don't sit zazen. If you want to achieve Buddhahood, there's no special type of person who achieves Buddhahood." This is what I'm talking about.

You know Nangaku was Baso's teacher, and Suzuki-roshi's favorite story was about Baso and the tile. Baso was doing zazen, studying zazen to attain Buddhahood, so Nangaku picked up a tile and began rubbing it. Baso said, "What are you doing?" Nangaku said, "I'm turning this into a jewel." So Baso said, "How can you make a tile a jewel?" And of course Nangaku said, "How can you make yourself into a Buddha?" And then he said, "If you want to make a cart go, do you hit the horse or the cart?" This is again the same.

Suzuki-roshi said we may starve to death at Tassajara or at Page Street. But he didn't think we would, if we just practiced zazen, if we just in our practice took care of everything completely. We need to trust this kind of activity—not studying X in order to understand X, and Y to understand Y, and so on. But by studying X we will understand everything. Just to have that confidence and practice Buddhism, practice zazen, just for the sake of zazen, is our way.

Many sayings reflect this kind of feeling. When it's night-time, dawn is here. Before winter is over, spring is here. Even if you don't understand it, or accept it completely, if you are practicing you should have this kind of confidence, you should try to accept it. Can you accept it? Can you just do zazen completely? Can you just do this sesshin completely, as if nothing else existed, as if you would die on Friday night?

There are two recognitions that you will come to when you are able to face things as they are, not wishing they were some other way. One, we can say, is death. By death I don't mean just that someone's going to die, though on death we may realize this deeper finality, as Dogen did watching his mother die, watching the twin trail of smoke rising from the incense stick. The finality I'm talking about you may recognize when someone goes crazy, when you can't reach someone, or when you cannot reach yourself; when there is almost nothing you can do about yourself, and less about a friend. And even less about the

suffering in this world. You can't do anything about each moment even. Each thing just happens, and hopefully you know your oneness with it.

And by zazen we're trying to develop our strength and ability to be one with our activity. You notice the finality of each thing, that it happens only once and is not repeatable, or graspable, or regainable, or re-doable. If you're not there, not present, it's too late. This recognition and not taking it too seriously, gives our life some seriousness. You know, by the time you wish or think, it's already too late. You take it too seriously when you think the outside world is there, saving up to get you.

And the other recognition is that we are corruptible. All of us are corruptible. All of us, when pushed, almost all of us have a price. You know, we'll sell our mother if we have to. I'm sorry to say so, but it's true. Governments use this to force people to do things. And many people use it to make the most of their own and others' corruptibility for profit or power. Much of our way of thinking is based on the idea that everything is repeatable and not corruptible.

Recognizing this suffering or this corruptibility, the Bodhisattva recognizes in himself, herself, this event, this eventuality, and so creates the conditions for good, let us say good. So the most basic suggestion in Buddhism for everyone is to practice good, avoid evil. Now good and evil in Buddhism are pretty close to the roots of the words good and evil. Good and God mean to unite something, to put something together, to recognize the larger body. And evil means to extend over, like the eaves of a house, to be off the mark, or to set something over, to set something up.

So the Bodhisattva doesn't set up anything. You don't try to create something, to make something that lasts. You don't try to possess anything. But you do



try to create—this is a rather subtle point—the conditions for people to exist beneficially. So first of all for yourself you try to create the conditions by which you can exist beneficially. And our way to do this is to practice zazen.

Student: I'm perplexed in my mind between the purposelessness of zazen and the purposes I have.

Roshi: This problem appears in every aspect of practice. One reason it's difficult for us to practice, for example, "no perception of ill will" is because of the kind of beings we conceive each other to be. "No perception of ill will" doesn't mean you are repressing ill will. It means that eventually you see a kind of being for whom you cannot feel ill will.

Many things in Buddhism are based on a whole new recognition of what we're actually doing. A kind of clue to this purpose and purposelessness is, for example: we may be practicing zazen actually because we want to get healthy, or attain super powers, or be less crazy, or not have people mad at us all the time, or to correct some gross mismanagement of our life by doing zazen every morning and organizing ourselves. This may be what has prompted us to do it, but as a practice we don't review this as the reason, and we try not to practice in the realm of the attainment or possessiveness which after all has caused our problem in the first place.

You will find out by experience that although some idea of attaining led you to sitting, when you sit with that idea, your sitting is quite dull and lifeless. Just to sit. Suzuki-roshi always said we must practice Buddhism just for Buddhism. Why Buddhism went wrong in the Meiji period, in modern Japan, is because its power had become too externalized. Buddhism is very powerful. It's such an ancient way of life that so many people have practiced. It moves so many people.

And you can use Buddhism for gain or fame or something like that. But Suzuki-roshi's emphasis with us was just to practice with each other for Buddhism alone. And he said in five or ten years Buddhism in America, and Zen Center, would have many friends. But we don't practice for this, even for society. Just to practice for Buddhism, just to sit for sitting.

The other reasons you have, you don't review them. If you find yourself thinking of them, you stop thinking of them. Do you understand? It's a kind of practice. It may seem rather artificial. But that only means you should go further and find out how artificial it all is anyway, find out that there is something there, some attitude already there, which you might as well counteract with another one, until you can drop all attitudes.

So please, in this sesshin, and those of you who are not in the sesshin too, become very friendly with your body and your life situation as you yourself, not discriminating, "this one or that one is really me." When you're doing zazen, just some painful stale feeling sometimes. Some painful ecstatic feeling sometimes. Without trying to identify or review.

And as you stop averaging your life at each moment and over time, you will find out many things. You will notice many mental phenomena, many subtle things. As I said yesterday, how wonderful your skin feels after zazen during

a sesshin. How the organ of your skin is teaching you. How cool the surface of your eyes feels. How your stomach feels. How when attitudes drop out of your breathing and mind and shoulders and hips, how refreshed you feel. Beginning to trust these perceptions.

The acts of Buddha are Buddha. The acts of you are you. These acts, these tiny acts that you are participating in. By your vow or participation, the color is very deep and you perceive things with full dimensions. When your vow is weak, your will-body is weak, you see things very flat and thin and colorless.

You begin by noticing subtle manifestations of the path, of the way of our existence, of Buddhism. And then you recede from noting them. One part doesn't have to observe it. Just let go. Just give it away. The first paramita, you know—just give it away. Until nothing but space is sitting zazen. Nothing but space is living your life. Nothing but space is sitting this sesshin, which you create something in the midst of.

To eat, to get up, in this way, in this sesshin, you may realize what you actually are—if there is a “who,” or even without a “who,” to realize how you exist, all together. Please let's do it. Let's find out how Suzuki-roshi wanted us to practice. Some fresh new way from our own intimate and immediate experience, freely studying everything, freely realizing our way. Thank you very much.

