

San-Pachi-Nenju - Shunryu Suzuki Transcript

Thursday, July 22, 1971

Tassajara

This evening I want to explain about san-pachi-nenju which we practice. Can you hear me?

Student: No.

SR: No. Okay. [Laughs, laughter.] San-pachi. San-pachi-nenju which we practiced this evening. Some of you must have joined the ceremony, and some of you must have seen it. But before I explain about san-pachi-nenju, I want to explain our-- what is our practice and what will be each one of yours practice-- practice of each one of you should be or will be.

Before everyone-- before we become Buddhist, you are lay Buddhist. And before you become lay Buddhist, you are laymen which does not belong to-- member of Buddhists. Now can you hear me? Member of Buddhist. So [there are] non-Buddhist people and Buddhists. And Buddhist can be classified in four: lay Buddhist-- lay Buddhist man and lay Buddhist woman and maybe layman and laywoman, and nun, and priest. Those are five class-- classes of Buddhist group. Four-- we have four groups.

And each layman accept Buddhists precepts. If usual person accepts precepts, we become Buddhist. And I have been explaining what is precepts. So tonight I will not speak-- talk about it; but if you become Buddhist, what kind of practice you will have is next thing-- is the thing I want to talk [about]-- to study.

For layman to receive the precepts-- precepts it is necessary for you to keep precepts. The most important one is-- precepts is the three refuges. I take refuge in the buddha; I take refuge in the dharma; and I take refuge in the sangha. And you repeat this practice in your everyday life. But it is too much [laughs] to explain tonight about it-- three refuges.

To, you know, to, in short, to receive the three refuges is to have right understanding of our life. It is same thing, you know, to have right understanding of our life and to receive three refuges is same thing. So if-- when you have right understanding of human life as it is, then you are said to be accepted, to have accepted Buddha's precepts. Nothing special-- nothing special practice, but usual practice. And you will have right understanding about, you know, our life.

But as you-- as long as you remain layman or laywoman, you have, you have to live in more dualistic world: good or bad, right or wrong, or fast or slow, successful or unsuccessful. And sometime, or, I am sorry to say, but most of the time, dualistic life goes first, maybe, and you don't have not much time to have calm, peaceful mind. But the difference between non-Buddhist and Buddhist is you know how our life should be. You know that we have no self-nature, and we don't exist as a person who has self-nature. We cannot be egoistic. We feel as if we could be very egoistic, but actually you know that is not possible. But even though

you know, as you are laymen, most of the time you have no time to forget about your dualistic life, so dualistic practice goes first.

So for layman some practice like Rinzai Zen is maybe better for someone. Rinzai practice is very dualistic; so that will give you some strength to encourage non-dualistic side more and to fight with dualistic idea-- to forget all about-- until you-- you can forget all about, you know, dualistic way of life even for a moment. That is so-called-it kensho. But that is, you know, just, even though you have kensho, you-- you do not have a Buddhist life completely. You just get a glance of your buddha nature, which is not egoistic. You just experience literally [laughs] about non-egoistic life. But it doesn't last, because you are so busy and you are deeply involved in usual life-- usual way of life. That is more-- that is layman or laywoman practice.

Soto way-- how, then, Soto way help a layman is let you follow non-dualistic way of life like Tassajara. Many laymen participate [in] our practice, which is not dualistic and which put more emphasis on non-dualistic practice. So if you follow Soto way, even though you do not feel you have entered [?] the non-dualistic experience, more and more your life will be non-dualistic because our way of practice-- our way we set up-- our practice is according to non-dualistic way of Buddha. That is why we Soto school put more emphasis on how to eat, how to drink, how to walk, work, or how to work, how to recite sutras. So those rituals set up by Soto teachers [are] based on non-dualistic idea.

So following non-dualistic way of life in Buddhist school, more and more, you will be familiar with non-dualistic life. The Soto way, as you may have noticed, do not-- is not so dualistic, and we do not encourage students so strictly by working or shouting [laughs]. We don't use, you know, stick so much. I have one, but I don't use so much as Rinzai master, maybe, use it. Because we have not much-- our practice is based on non-dualistic way.

So teacher thinks-- if teacher is very sincere, naturally, you know, students will be sincere. That student is sleeping means teacher is sleeping. Non-dualism, you know, teacher and student one. So when student sleeps, teacher sleeps; when teacher sleeps, student sleeps.

Student [DC?]: Wake up!

SR: [Laughs, laughter.] When student says "wake up," teacher will wake up. [Laughter.] That is something like Soto way. And that is why we put more emphasis on how to offer incense or how to work or how to eat. How it is so is very difficult to maybe, very difficult to understand for beginners; but when you have some experience you will understand difference between Soto and Rinzai. And both Soto and Rinzai have its own advantage, but both Rinzai and Soto-- anyway, main point of practice is not to attain enlightenment but right after you attain enlightenment. You know, like Buddha practiced six years, and like Bodhidharma practiced zazen nine years, even though they have enlightenment. That is good example of Buddhist practice. Not only Soto and Rinzai, but also all the schools of Buddhism put emphasis on everyday life of-- or life of Buddhist. As long as Buddhism is for people it should be like that. So difference between Rinzai or Soto or Shin school or Tendai or Shingon-- is, you know, the entrance is different; but if you enter the gate of Buddhism, what you-- the way of life you have are not different.

Difficult, you know, set of circumstances [?]- I think san-pachi-nenju, that is very-- if you see san-pachi-nenju, you will understand what is our practice, especially when Ino says-- I have-- Do you have the translation of the san-pachi-nenju? Do you have it there?

So after-- Oh. Do you have it? [Inaudible response from student.]

Okay. After we clean up zendo and our rooms and everywhere, we observe san-pachi-nenju. San means three; pachi means eight. And every three days-- three and eight days: the third, the eighth, thirteenth, eighteenth, twenty-third, twenty eighth before [1-2 words] -- four and nine day. Four and nine day is the day we have no dokusan-- my holiday [laughs, laughter].

But if you understand that that four and nine day is-- are the day when we have no schedule. But strictly speaking, hosan means no dokusan. San is dokusan-- san. No dokusan on four and nine day. Nowadays we do not have not much zazen practice, but we can practice zazen if you like [laughs]. But most people understand four and nine days is the day when we have no schedule; but it is not right understanding. Dokusan means to see-- to see a student personal. Doku means personal, or alone, or independent. Doku. San is to visit teacher. Dokusan.

So before-- Dogen Zenji, first of all, when he was studying at Rinzai monastery, under Eisai he studied koan practice first and he went to China with Myozen, a disciple of Eisai, he went to China. And he attained enlightenment under Eisai Zenji, and after that to have more mature practice he continued his training-- his practice until Eisai Zenji passed away. And since he thought there is good-- no more good teacher in Japan, so he went to China and continued his practice.

And he was-- he-- when he met Myozen Zenji, he had great confidence in his practice. And he had great confidence in his non-selfish practice. And he set up how to have non-selfish practice-- how to set up non-selfish practice for himself and for his disciples.

Of course, those rules is not set up only by Dogen Zenji. Those rules actually set up [in] maybe eighth century, in China, by Hyakujo-- Hyakujo Shingi. Because of the severe persecution we had, unfortunately, his rules were-- doesn't exist anymore. But there-- there are many rules after, you know, Hyakujo Shingi-- Hyakujo Zenji. We can see the quotations from Hyakujo Shingi, so we can know what kind of setup Hyakujo made.

So he [Dogen] gathered-- or he followed Hyakujo Shingi carefully. Not only observing the rules [?], you know, studying Buddhist precepts. We have school of precepts, you know-- precepts and doctrine [?] of zazen school. They are only studying precepts, so Dogen Zenji studied precepts-- various precepts, precepts texts-- texts of precepts, and he carefully set up non-dualistic way of life for monks and laymen.

He said as long as you are Buddhist, whether you are layman or monk, it is necessary to observe the first principle first, the next principle-- the second principle-- next [laughs]. Do you understand? The first principle goes first; and second principle follows. Value [?] of first principle. First principle means non-dualistic way. The second precept-- the second principle is-- is good means to lead people to the first principle. So it is a little bit more dualistic.

When you don't know which way you should take, which way should be more important, then you should put more emphasis on the first principle, not the second principle-- principle of the duality.

[Unfolds paper.] Here is [the text of San-pachi-nenju]. Oh. [Laughs.] "Listen carefully everyone -- " Will you read it? [Spoken to a student.]

Student:

"Listen carefully everyone.

Twenty-four centuries, fifty-seven years ago,
the great Tathagata entered nirvana.

When this day is gone, also life thereby decreases.

Like a fish in a puddle, what pleasure is there here?

A man needs to practice constantly, as if to save his head from fire.

Mindful of transiency, pursue the path with diligence and care.

Throughout the temple, the dharma safely resides,
bringing everyone peace.

All those in ten directions know an increase in joy,
a growth of wisdom.

Thus mindful of [1 word unclear], we chant the names of
Buddha."

SR: Do you understand? It says: "Listen carefully, everyone. Twenty-four centuries, fifty-seven years ago, the great Tathagata entered nirvana. When this day is gone, also life thereby decrease." Our life, therefore, you know, thereby decrease. "Like a fish in a puddle, what pleasure is there here? A man needs to practice constantly as if to save his head from fire. Mindful of transiency, pursue the path with diligence and care."

You know, our-- here it says: "When this day is gone, our life thereby decrease. Like a fish in a puddle, what pleasure is there here?" You know, our dualistic life of pleasure, dualistic pleasure, and these students or people who live in the dualistic life is like a fish who lives in a puddle. From Buddhist viewpoint, our ordinary life is so small, like a puddle. In the puddle, you know, we are trying to be successful and seeking for pleasure in puddle. Is there any pleasure in muddy puddle? [Laughs.] [3 words unclear.] And when you, you know, hear it in monastery with your friend who is practicing non-dualistic practice, you will feel that way; but in the city, you know, you may not feel in that way. "What-- What-- What is he saying? What does it mean? He is living in the puddle, not me." [Laughter.]

But we put emphasis more on first principle, the way of life to follow the first principle, which is forever, which exist everywhere-- not only human life but also for all sentient beings. That is the life of the first principle. So day and night-- so if our life, if in our life, always first principle goes first, and if we take care of our practice like a man whose head is on fire [laughs]-- or, you know, a man whose head on fire should jump into pond [laughs] or stream, you know, and save your head. We should practice so hard as-- as a man on his head trying to extinguish the fire.

When we practice the first principle in the monastery, everyone will have complete joy to participate in and to join and-- or to see-- to see people practicing the first principle which exist forever. That is, you know, good example of Soto practice. But if you do not practice our way like a man whose head is on fire, it does not mean so much. So we must be completely involved in our practice, and we should always put the first principle first. That is, you know, the practice after you have attained enlightenment. And even though you have-- you haven't attained enlightenment, if you join the practice of the first principle, more and more you don't know when you attain enlightenment. Eventually you will attain enlightenment.

What is it? For a Soto priest it is okay, not okay, but it is permissible to enter the monastery without attaining enlightenment. Eventually will attain enlightenment. The difference between the people who has attained enlightenment and who haven't is whether you realize your hat [is] on your head or not [laughs]. Sometimes, you know, having his own hat on his head, he will seek for his own hat: "Where is my hat?" [Laughs.] But actually, his-- the hat is on his head. Anyway we have buddha nature. But most people do not feel in that way and [are] seeking for buddha nature somewhere else.

Maybe it is like to seek for treasure when you have a lot of jewels and diamonds in each pocket [laughs]. "I must have some valuable jewels inside, in the pocket." But until he knows-- he found out-- he find out the jewel in his pocket, he may seek for it. That is famous, you know, parable.

So anyway, we will find out our own treasure, and that is our precepts too. With it is nothing but treasures you have. But when you receive it, you receive it as if you receive something special [laughs] from Buddha. But actually, more and more-- "Oh! This is a treasure we have had." That is how you feel when you have attained enlightenment.

Before maybe when I was young, maybe thirty or forty years ago, Buddhist didn't-- people didn't think Buddhist teaching is so helpful teaching or Zen, because they were involved in the second principle, teaching small dualistic way of life. And they were so interested in materialistic invention [?], so they have no time to study Buddhism. But recently the situation is like this [?]- more and more-- many people started to [be] interested in what is ultimate reality. That would be-- that should be our life actually. More and more, people put the first principle, put more emphasis on the first principle. If you know what is the first principle, the second principle could be the first principle too. In that way, you know, you can help people without giving any arrogant with him [?] or without giving any fancy talk. If you talk about why things exist, what kind of nature we have, and what is the difficult point in your practice, what kind of effort you should make, then that is the only way to help people in its true sense. [Sentence finished. Tape changed.]

Student A: [Unclear first time. Student repeated.] Well, you said today we should practice as though your head was on fire, and I wonder how can you practice zazen and still maintain a calm attitude in your practice?

SR: [Laughing] That is just parable, you know. You don't have to feel in that way. If your head is on fire, it is terrible [laughs, laughter] but usually we are so lazy so Buddha [laughs] told

you in that way. That's all. That is just parable. You don't have to take literally. You have to make effort to obtain calmness of your mind. Okay? Hai.

Student B: What is reality to an enlightened being?

SR: Reality. Reality is, you know-- this is, again, just my explanation, you know, or traditional explanation of the reality-- but actually, you have to feel by yourself. But reality, we say, reality has two side, always two side. So, when you think about it, it is contradictory. One side of it is very calm, and the other side is very restless and nervous and dualistic. But strictly speaking, if you have eyes to see something which looks like dualistic, [it] is not actually dualistic. So when you see things in that way, you-- it means that you have calmness of your mind, and your mind is not stick to one-sided view, or you are not interested in just one-sided view.

You may listen to someone: "This world is so noisy!" "Oh, yes. It is very noisy [laughs], isn't it?" "It is very hot." "Yes, it is hot [laughs]." Someone may say, "Although it is hot, isn't it nice to have hot weather?" "Oh, yes, it is [laugh]!" You know, it looks like dualistic, but actually for him hot weather is also good. But for someone who like only cool-- nice and cool weather, hot weather is, you know, dreadful [laughs]-- horrible. The same thing could be, you know, something agreeable and something disagreeable. So when-- whether it is dualistic or non-dualistic is up to the person who observe things. So actually, duality means to have calmness of your mind. Some other question? Okay. Some other questions? Hai.

Student C: How can you say some things are dualistic and others are not?

SR: Well-- Again, it is, you know-- even though it looks like dualistic, for someone who knows non-dualistic, who are practicing non-dualistic practice, something dualistic is not dualistic. But when you do not know anything about non-duality, it is really dualistic.

Student C: Isn't everything both dualistic and non-dualistic at the same time?

SR: Yeah, same time. Or you can say there is nothing can be just dualistic or just non-dualistic. But you make, you know, you think dualistic; your way of observation is dualistic most of the time. So things is not, itself is not dualistic. So to see-- when you are able to see things-as-it-is, it is not dualistic. That is why I said it is like a hat which is on your head, you know. Sometime you feel you have a hat; sometime you don't feel so. That is why we must have practice; and even though you have kensho, you-- your life still could be dualistic. You cannot, you know [laughs], you cannot be a buddha in one night, in one minute. It is not possible. Your karma doesn't allow you to be so.

Student D: If all life is equal and equally valuable, why do we not eat meat? Why are we vegetarian?

SR: [Laughs.] It is strange. I don't know exactly. [Laughs, laughter.] I think we have to study more. But we are very greedy anyway [laughs]. It may be more important to live, maybe, not to be so greedy. Then, whatever you eat, it will give you strength. But even though you eat something very good, if you become greedy it can hurt you. That is very true. And we-- we are

very much-- we are very much materialistic, you know, so spiritual side is forgotten. Even though you eat something good always, it doesn't help so much. Unless your mind is very calm, and unless your tummy is very strong, calm and strong, it doesn't help so much. Why I say so is, you know-- usually, if you eat meat and fish a lot [laughs] they will give you a lot of nourishment; but it is not always so.

When I went to Eiheiji monastery, food at that time-- recently Eiheiji food is-- I had pretty good, you know-- but before, it was very poor food. Morning time gomashio and gruel-- rice, white rice, gruel, and pickle. That's all. And at lunch we had rice mixed with meat, you know. That is pretty good food. But no-- not much vegetables, but seaweed-- seaweed, miso soup, and pickle. And dinner, you know [laughs laughter], what we had was rice soup again and soybeans. That's all. And pickles, sometimes. So most of the time soybean and rice soup. That's all. So we thought-- [laughter]-- how is it possible to survive with such a poor food? So, what we did is to have a lot of it-- it was always, you know, "more, more, more"! And supper generally is a lot of, you know, rice. But meat? Rice soup can be like this [laughs], but as much as possible [1-2 words unclear], you know, to feel more. In my monastery almost all the student went to hospital [laughter]. Almost no exception; it was normal [laughs]. And after that, we gain food-- we gain weigh. Much more-- we weigh much more than when we were in the city. One more size [?]. So food is not complete.

If your mind is very calm, then food helps you better, I think. So it is a kind of superstition, you know, or kind of delusion [?] to think you can fish-- [1-2 words unclear] fish steak, good, will help you. It is a kind of superstition, I think. When I was young, I already-- I could go beyond this kind of superstition. I can eat anything, you know, as [that] someone, you know, eat. If someone eat, I can eat anything. It is true [?]. And if you taste it, you know, everything is pretty good, you know. Every food has its own taste. Because you add too much salt or too much seasoning or sugar, it ruins its own flavor and taste. If you just eat it, you know, like a medicine, or more [?], or when you take medicine you-- [laughs]-- that is the way. [3-4 words unclear]. If you taste it carefully, it is pretty good. And when-- I think when you feel it, it is good. It will help you. Maybe that is superstition too [laughs, laughter].

Almost time?

Okay?

Okay.

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