

LECTURES BY KATAGIRI SENSEI

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In Zen Buddhism training is the same as enlightenment; in other words, training itself is enlightenment. Training does not exist apart from enlightenment. This is the main point of Zen Buddhism. Not only our practice, but whenever you do something, each action, each conduct is itself, without discrimination between amateurness and skillfulness. When you want to cross a river from this shore to the other shore, you will probably walk step by step. One step is not merely one step. One step should possess the goal of the other shore. That is why we can make our effort to walk step by step. So one step should be . . . the quality of one step should be the same quality of the other shore. Our conduct should be so . . . each of our actions should be so. I have often taken a spinning top for an example. When the top is spinning it is very difficult to say whether it is spinning or not . . . spinning or at rest. When a top is spinning exactly, the top itself possesses the function of moving and of resting. So it possesses two sides to its function. So when we see the top in the fullness of its function, we call this full-function. When the top possesses full-function, the top itself is the top, the complete top. When the top is stopped, we cannot say, this is top. But you can say, we call it a top, even when it is stopped. But here we already have the idea, the anticipation that the top spins. The true meaning of top is its full-function. So it has both sides—spinning and being at rest, not spinning and yet ready to spin. The same applies to our conduct, to our effort. When we do something, and make our effort in order to carry it out, even as a beginner, we should possess full-function in itself. That is why we can make an effort to do something. One step is not merely one step; one step is the goal. So our training is not merely our training. Our training moment after moment is enlightenment. This is very important for students of Zen Buddhism.

It is often pointed out that everybody possesses Buddha Nature within himself, and that zazen itself is identical with the expression of Buddha Nature. This is called kike onza in Japanese, which means to return to one's original home and to sit with massive composure. Kike means to return to one's home; onza means to sit with massive composure. This doesn't mean we should try to regain something that we have lost. Our Original Home already exists by nature.

Because he ate something prohibited man lost paradise and fell down to hell. So in this world man has to make every effort to regain paradise. This is the usual understanding of returning to one's original home. But kike onza does not have this meaning. We have Buddha Nature in ourselves, so to practice zazen is to sit in our Original Home with massive composure.

From this point we cannot practice zazen as an ordinary person opposite to Buddha. Buddha himself practices zazen, so here there can be no dualism for discrimination. If we try to make a religious effort as an ordinary person, opposite to Buddha, it will be impossible to gain Buddha Nature. We would have to stay an ordinary person forever. So it is important for students of Buddhism to settle down in the world that we already possess, the Buddha Nature in ourselves. Our every practice, or religious effort should start from this point. This is very important. If the idea of dualism creating discrimination is the first consideration in our lives, the self must be killed somehow or other, even on the cross, or even by shooting.

The other day I saw a very strange article in a newspaper. One of the legislators in Texas will try to bring a bill before the general assembly in Texas as follows: If a married man and woman misconduct themselves with another man and woman they can have the right to kill them by shooting. This is very strange. This way of thinking is based on the dualism which creates discrimination, which has become the first consideration in our lives. From this point of view we must try to kill the ego by shooting, or some other way. But in Buddhism there is no self, or no ego in this world to kill.

From this point of view everything should be identical with the self. For example, you think you will go to heaven and you will be able to gain everything that you want. At that time, if you gain everything that you want in paradise even the desire to gain is useless; even the existence of heaven is useless. So, if there is no self, or no ego to kill, the ego is useless for our actual life. So from this point, everything is the self; everything is the teacher for the self. So kike onza means to sit in our own Original Home with massive composure. It doesn't mean to regain paradise, or the heaven that we lost before. There is no idea or judgment about whether we lost it or not. From the beginning we carry paradise with both hands in our daily life. So it is not necessary to seek Buddha Nature or ordinary person. When you go to hell carrying paradise in both hands, you will find the true meaning of paradise, or Buddha Nature, or truth. So when you sit in meditation it is not necessary to know where Buddha Nature is, or where truth is. You should exert yourself in right understanding to sit in meditation, that's all.