

LECTURE THREE

3.1. The Five Categories of Zen

3.1.0 Introduction

Let us now review the various kinds of Zen. You must learn how they are different from each other, so that you do not make mistakes concerning important points, e.g. whether enlightenment (satori) is indispensable to Zen at all, or what the ultimate goal of Zen is, etc. As a matter of fact, there are some types of Zen that are very deep, and some that are rather shallow; some lead to satori, and some do not. Tradition holds that at the time of Shakyamuni there existed ninety or ninety-five schools of philosophy or religion in India, each professing their own style of Zen, and each slightly differing from one another.

It can be said that all major religions possess some degree of "Zen," as they normally consider prayer as one of their major practices, and prayer requires concentration of the mind-heart. The teachings of Confucius and Mencius, those of Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu, have also their share of "Zen," since the concentration of the mind is more or less presupposed in each of them. In Japan you can see the influence of Zen in many cultural or artistic activities, for example, tea ceremony, Noh-play, kendo, judo, flower arrangement etc. Also, there have been many people who consciously brought in the elements of Zen into their spiritual movements (Japanese type of sitting meditation by Torajirô Okada, 1872-1920, or Indian Yoga by Tempû Nakamura) (1876-1968). Although "Zen" in the broad sense comprises all these different ways of concentration, we will speak about "Zen" in the narrower sense and follow the five main classifications of Zen according to the presentation by Keihô Shûmitsu Zenji (780-841). He is one of the early Chinese Zen masters, whose Zen categories we still find quite relevant and useful even today.

Looked at from outside these five categories of Zen are hardly different from one another. There might be slight differences as to the way the legs are crossed and hands are held or how breathing is controlled etc., but **the basic elements are exactly the same: erect sitting posture, correct breathing, and the inner concentration of the mind. But they differ greatly in the substance and in the aim of their Zen practice. Especially beginners need, therefore, to pay careful attention. You should know the differences well enough when you come for the**

first time to your Zen master and state your “degree of aspiration” and ask for proper guidance, for these categories can clearly express your own goal in Zen, which makes it easier for the Zen master to lead you accordingly.

3.1.1. Bompū-Zen (Zen for Ordinary People)

The first type of Zen is called bompū-Zen (Zen for ordinary people). This type of Zen is basically void of any philosophical or religious character, and **it is practiced with the well-founded belief that it can contribute to improving your physical as well as mental health.** In fact, various psychosomatic symptoms are likely to be ameliorated, and the practitioner’s entire well-being will be generally promoted through zazen. Therefore, this type of Zen is for all people, regardless of religious conviction or philosophical orientation. **The main point of this type of Zen practice is to learn to concentrate yourself and control your mind. Without this faculty of effective concentration you cannot be successful in anything you seriously undertake.** Furthermore, through properly training bompū-Zen you will be able to control your mind and to overcome various temptations you had earlier no power to resist (against). Also, many attachments which have enslaved you for such a long time can naturally be loosened. **A consistent practice of this type of Zen will moreover contribute to enriching your personality and deepening your character, since the serene Zen meditation will inevitably develop your intellect, emotion and will power.** However, it must be maintained that bompū-Zen, although it is far more powerful than reading books or studying philosophy and ethics, is unable to reveal the deepest and most fundamental nature of a human being and to solve the basic question of life and death. The reason is that this type of Zen is not capable of dissolving the obstinate delusion of oneself being basically separate from all others.

3.1.2. Gedō-Zen (Non-Buddhist Zen)

The second category of Zen is called gedō-Zen (Non-Buddhist Zen). Gedō literally means “an outside way,” i.e., teachings other than Buddhist, since it is seen from the Buddhist viewpoint. **This is a Zen clearly motivated by religious and philosophical interests,** but is not a Buddhist Zen in the precise sense of the word. Hindu yoga, the quietist sitting of Confucianism, some meditation practices in Christianity – these are some examples of gedō-Zen. **One possible characteristic of gedō-Zen is that it often aims to develop various supernatural powers or abilities, and/or to acquire special talents above the ordinary human level.** Although these things are cultivated through the continuous

strengthening of jôriki, the power of mind stabilization, **it must be remembered that any type of Zen, whose sole target is to develop such jôrike with the above-mentioned concept, does not belong to authentic Buddhist Zen.** An additional point: There are certain Hindu Sects that practice Zen in order to be "reborn in heaven." Zen Buddhism does not aim at this. Of course, Zen Buddhism does not refute the image of heavenly strata or the idea that a person could be reborn in heaven by virtue of performing ten kinds of meritorious actions etc. But the Zen Buddhists themselves do not crave for heavenly rebirth. Conditions in heaven are said to be too happy, comfortable and easy, and the person there would in the end lose all motivation to do zazen seriously. Therefore, when the accumulated "merits" are all gone, the person might fall to hell. **Zen practitioners prefer to be born into the human world and to devote themselves to zazen, in order to ultimately realize Buddhahood, the essence of our being.**

3.1.3. Shôjô-Zen (Small Vehicle Zen)

The third kind of Zen is shôjô-Zen (Small Vehicle Zen). The word "vehicle" means a teaching or a method which takes you from this world of delusion to the other world of enlightenment. The "small" vehicle means that it is conceived to accommodate only one's own self. The "large" vehicle (Mahayana), on the other hand, is named "large" because it takes lots of other people at the same time. The former could be compared to a bicycle with just one rider, while the latter would be a bus or a big ship where a large number of people could be accommodated to go to the destination. Therefore, **shôjô-Zen is a type of Zen which looks only to one's own peace of mind and salvation in mind.** This can be classified as a Buddhist Zen, but a Zen which does not precisely match with Shakyamuni Buddha's supreme teaching. It is rather an expedient means conceded for those practitioners who really cannot grasp the deepest dimension of Shakyamuni's intention. Each entity cannot be separated from the whole, since it contains the entire universe in itself. Therefore, **it is impossible to attain true peace of mind only for yourself, while you stay totally aloof from other beings.** However, there are people who just cannot believe that there is such a world of Oneness as true reality. Even if they are taught countless times that the world of relative opposition is an illusory world, a product of their own distorted conviction, they cannot stop clinging to it. Those people very often find this world originally evil and sinful, full of killing, hating, being killed and being hated; it is indeed the world where

suffering lasts forever, day in and day out. They are often in despair and wish to escape from it, finding that even death is preferable to lingering longer in this world. Shôjô-Zen might grant an effective answer to those people. Its objective is to stop and suspend all human thoughts with the consequence that the mind becomes perfectly still like a total blank sheet; thus, the practitioner enters into the state of mushinjô, a condition in which all human senses have ceased to function, as if extinguished, so that only lifeless consciousness remains. You could soar into a state similar to an ever-lasting trance for some time or for an indefinite period of time. If it were to continue indefinitely, death might follow as a matter of course, naturally and without pain. Buddhists speak here also about "dying without rebirth"; such a process of dying without being reborn is depicted minutely in a Buddhist philosophical work named the Kusharon (Abhidharmakosabhasya; a book by Seshin (Vasubandhu) in the 4th-5th C.).

3.1.4. Daijô-Zen (Great Vehicle Zen)

The fourth type of zazen is daijô-Zen (Great Vehicle (Mahayana) Zen). This indeed is an authentic Zen for the Buddhists, since **its primary purpose is to attain kenshô-godô, i.e. seeing through our essential nature and realizing it in our actual life.** In fact, the daijô-Zen presupposes that those who practice this type of Zen understand well enough the relevance of Shakyamuni's own experience of great awakening and are firmly determined to practice in order to break through their illusory dualism to come to the absolute reality of the universe. **The Buddha Way relies basically upon enlightenment.** After his own great experience Shakyamuni spent more than four decades teaching people the way to come to their true essential nature. This intention and method of Shakyamuni have been handed down from masters to their students all through the generations, until the present age. If a school of Zen does not take enlightenment seriously or even denies it, then it is quite certain that that Zen never belongs to our daijô-Zen. However, it is necessary to mention the following point: **In Zen practice, you naturally set your aim to come to the awakening of your true self. Do not consider, however, that zazen is simply a means to enlightenment. In fact, it is the manifestation itself of your essential nature.** A thoughtful master will, therefore, admonish the students from the outset that their practice is already a realization of what they essentially are, namely their Buddha-nature. If zazen were merely a means to the end called enlightenment, it would be totally nonsense to go on practicing after the so-called kensho. The truth of the matter is exactly the other way around: As Dogen Zenji points out, **the more profoundly you see your intrinsic nature, the more fervently you feel the need of further practice.**

3.1.5. Saijôjô-Zen (Supreme Vehicle Zen)

The last type of Zen is saijôjô-Zen, which means "Zen of the highest vehicle." This is the zenith and the crown of Buddhist Zen practice. It is this type of Zen that all the Buddhas and great masters of the past advocated and maintained as the expression of the absolute life in its purest form. It is also the Zen which Dogen Zenji spoke of, free from all ideas about enlightenment or related consciousness. It is justly called shikan-taza, and we will discuss it in more detail in a coming lecture.

Let me point out just one aspect of saijôjô-Zen. In this category of Zen, means and end go hand in hand. **If this type of Zen is practiced correctly, you, even as a beginner, sit with a deep conviction that your zazen is the manifestation of your undefinable essential nature, and, at the same time, you sit in firm belief in your sub-consciousness that the day will come when you cry out, "This is it!", realizing clearly what is meant by your original nature.** Therefore, you do not wittingly strive for a quick enlightenment. The Rinzai School evaluates daijô-Zen as the highest form and saijôjô-Zen as under it. However, you can see that saijôjô-Zen comprises daijô-Zen, or, to put it in a different way, daijô-Zen and saijôjô-Zen are in reality complementary. The Soto School today, on the other hand, maintains that we are already Buddhas as we are and we do not need any experience of enlightenment. This is a grave mistake, which deteriorates and reduces shikan-taza, the supreme form of zazen, to a mere state of bompû-Zen, explained above as the very first one of the five categories of Zen. This concludes the explanation of the five categories of Zen. **Let me suggest that you recall our earlier lecture on "the three aims of Zen," and compare those aims with the five categories of Zen just mentioned. Then you might understand the five types, especially the last two, all the more clearly.**

3.2. "Counting Breaths" (sûsoku-kan) (3)

This time you are asked to try a new way of concentration: Up to now you were supposed to count your exhalations; now please count "one" when you first inhale, then "two" when you inhale next, up to ten. This way is more difficult than counting your exhalations, since most of our mental as well as physical activities are performed with our exhaling breath. However, as this way of practice is rather difficult, you can take it as another challenging method of trying to increase your concentration. So, **try counting your inhaling breaths with your mind, until we meet for the next lecture.**

LECTURE FOUR

4.1. Makyô 4.1.1 Illusory Perceptions

Here we are going to speak about visions or sensations which are commonly called makyô. In fact, **makyô means various illusory phenomena (such as deceptive appearances, hallucinations, feelings, fantasies, revelations etc.) which are rather commonly experienced by a person who seriously keeps practicing zazen.** Ma stands for "devil" and kyô for "sphere" or "realm." Makyô are, therefore, "devilish" phenomena that appear and disturb the practitioner of zazen. However, such phenomena themselves are not evil by nature. They become obstacles and grave hindrances only when the practitioner does not know the real nature of those phenomena and gets trapped by them.

There are two ways of using the word makyô: either in a broad sense or in a narrow sense. When used in a broad and general sense, we can say that the entire life of ordinary people is nothing but a "makyô." Also, a person who holds a strong attachment to what he or she has attained in terms of satori still remains in the world of makyô. That is, it is extremely hard to be entirely free from all makyô, even after enlightenment. Not only ordinary practitioners, but also Bodhisattvas such as Monju (Manjusri) and Kannon (Avalokitesvara) – although they are far advanced in their practice, much more than common practitioners, they are still said to possess a certain degree of makyô. If not, they would already have become perfect Buddhas, totally free of any kind of makyô. – But we are not going to speak about this sort of makyô in this lecture.

Here we are dealing with makyô in the specific sense of the word. If a person joins a sesshin of five to seven days for the first time and tries very hard to sit, he or she is inclined to experience, on the third or fourth day, some sort of makyô in various nature and intensity. These makyô are, in fact, extremely varied: Their forms are limitless, each matching the personality, character history and situation of the respective practitioners.

There are makyô related to touch or smell or bodily movement. Sometimes the entire body could sway sideways or rock to and fro. It is not

rare that words spring out without your knowing or an extremely delicate perfume is perceived out of nowhere.

Visual hallucinations are most common. For example, one is sitting in zazen with one's eyes wide open, when all of a sudden the tips of the tatami before one's eyes look as if they were swaying up and down like ocean waves. Or everything may suddenly fade out or turn pitch-black in front of your eyes. A simple mark on the door may suddenly change into an animal or devil or angelic being. Once there was a Zen disciple who would see visions of "masks": masks of demons and/or those of jesters. When asked whether he had had any history with such masks, he slowly remembered that he, as a child, had seen those things at a local festival in Kyûshû (one of the big southern islands in Japan). Another disciple was always annoyed in his zazen by the strong vision of the Buddha and his disciples walking around him reciting sutras; he was able to get rid of these scenes only by throwing himself into a big barrel of ice-cold water outside!

Many makyô cases also appear in the form of illusory hearing. It might be a sound of some musical instrument or other big noises like a loud explosion, which might actually make one jump up. Of course, these sounds can be "heard" only by the person who has this makyô. One person would hear the sound of a bamboo flute during zazen. He actually had learned how to play the bamboo flute many years before, but had not played it for a long time. Still, when he sat in zazen, the flute sound would constantly come back to him. In the Zazen Yôjinki (Precautions for Zazen; s. above) we read the following description about makyô:

"The body may feel hot or cold or glasslike or hard or heavy or light. This happens because the breath is not well harmonized (with the mind) and needs to be carefully regulated."

Further it reads:

"One may experience the sensation of sinking or floating, or may alternately feel hazy and sharply alert. The disciple may develop the faculty of seeing through solid objects as though they were transparent, or he may experience his own body as a translucent substance. He may see Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Penetrating insights may suddenly come to him, or passages of sutras which were particularly difficult to understand may suddenly become luminously clear to him. All these abnormal visions and sensations are merely the

symptoms of an impairment arising from a maladjustment of the mind with the breath.”

Other religions as well as other schools of Buddhism highly evaluate experiences which contain visions of the divine beings or experiences of hearing unworldly voices, performing miracles, receiving heavenly instructions, or purifying oneself through certain religious rites or performing miraculous deeds. These practices may lead to a positive attitude to life, and in that respect, they seem to be of some value. But seen from the point of view of practicing zazen with its ultimate aim, all these experiences are nothing but makyô, which have no decisive meaning on the way of attaining your true self..

4.1.2. How to Deal with Makyô

The important question is: What is the fundamental nature of these makyô, which are supposed to disturb you on the way of zazen? **They are nothing but temporary states of mind at a certain point in the ripening process of your zazen practice as your concentration power increases.** That is: when the ever-moving waves of thoughts on the surface of the shallow consciousness are more or less pacified, debris of past experiences and impressions, which remain in the deeper layers of the sub-consciousness, rise irregularly to the surface of the consciousness, creating an impression of very vivid and impressive reality. Therefore, makyô represent a kind of mixture of the real and the unreal and are somewhat similar to dreams which one has during sleep in the night. Dreams do not appear to us when we are very deeply asleep, but mostly when we are half-asleep or in a shallow sleep (often in the so-called REM-period). Likewise, makyô do not appear to a person who is in a very deep absorption or real Samadhi.

Important: you should never be led into the idea that these phenomena are realities and therefore meaningful. No, they are not. Even if you have a pretty vision of some Bodhisattva, it does not mean at all that you are closer to such a being yourself – in the same manner that having a dream of becoming a billionaire does not promise your becoming one when you wake up. This further means that there is no reason at all to boast about your makyô experiences; at the same time, you should not get terrified or discouraged at all even if you have a makyô of an awfully ugly monster or anything of the sort.

It is of particular importance that you do not get fascinated and enticed when you see a Buddha or godly beings blessing you or granting a supernatural message, or endowing some prophetic announcement which eventually turns out to be a reality. Even those cases are nothing but makyô in the process of attaining your true self. Therefore, they are simply a waste of your energy if you linger around these phenomena and get infatuated by them. **The absolute rule is: ignore them!**

However, one thing is sure: the fact that those phenomena appear to you is a certain sign, showing that you have reached the deeper level of your consciousness and therefore are at a crucial level of your zazen practice on the way to your self-realization. Simply keep going on! They say that even Shakyamuni Buddha, before he attained his great enlightenment, was greatly troubled by a spell of such makyô phenomena, which are termed as "obstructing devils." **Once more: Each time you encounter a makyô, pay no attention to it, but simply keep doing the assigned zazen practice with all your spiritual energy.**

4.2. "Following Breaths" (zuisoku-kan)

This time you are asked to try another method of inner concentration named "**following the breaths**" (zuisoku-kan). Up to now you have counted your exhalations and inhalations; now, **simply follow your breathing with full awareness.** That is, **when you breathe in, just watch your breathing-in with your so-called "mind's eye"; when you breathe out, you just stay aware that you are breathing out.**

This method of concentration is a little more difficult than the breaths-counting one, because when you count your breaths, the very act of counting helps you with focusing your concentration as a concrete support, like a cane when you walk. If you find yourself distracted and carried away from the counting, you simply have to restart your counting to get back on track again. Now this "cane" is gone, and you must walk without any help. If you stop following the breathing, your concentration is disrupted. You must constantly keep watching your breaths.

Counting the breaths as well as following the breaths are two methods very often given to beginners. But they are by no means reserved for only beginners; any advanced student can use them as well. Furthermore, **both counting and following breaths are, in themselves, perfect manifestations of your essence, your true nature. Maybe you do not see this point so easily, but it is a real fact. So, you should not take**

these practices lightly. Please keep in mind that as you go on practicing this method of watching your breathing faithfully, you will inevitably be led to a great enlightenment for sure (since it is the presentation of great enlightenment itself!).