

## LECTURE

by Yamada Mumon-roshi

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At first we have to die, but then we have to be reborn. When rebirth is realized, there must be some touch with the objective world. Shakyamuni Buddha said that when he became enlightened, he saw the morning star. But before he saw the morning star, his mind must have been a zero. In order for him to forget all of his experiences before that time, his mind must have been very pure. He had had no experience with that morning star; he had no information about it. And that pure mind of the Buddha was reborn when he suddenly saw the morning star. That star was the first star for Shakyamuni Buddha after he was born. The star had no name. There was no discrimination between the star itself and Shakyamuni Buddha, who saw the star. They were one. He saw the star as if he himself were shining—not the star. Then because he saw himself truly, everything could be seen—flowers, insects, trees. Then he realized that every existence belonged to himself.

In Buddhism we call it *sunyata*, or emptiness. Human beings exist in this zero, and to know this zero completely is Zen. If we sit correctly, strictly, forgetting our body and mind, casting off everything, then we can find the realm of zero naturally, we can sit in the midst of Zen. First you have to die, and this means what I said just now. This is a very difficult thing to realize, but if you do it with a zealous mind, you can accomplish it, I believe.

Dogen says that to forget yourself is to be enlightened by the numerous Dharmas. This is the same thing I have said. There must be a confrontation between me and you, or between the subjective world and the objective world which leads to oneness, or totalness. It is as if there is a clean, pure mirror, which reflects the objective world very accurately. The reason why the mirror reflects the objective world accurately is that it doesn't have a selfish mind. The mirror can accept the face that is in front of it. The mirror responds according to the situation in front of it. If the person cries, the mirror cries. To recognize that the world in front of us is not different from our mind is wisdom, and to know the suffering in the world before us is compassion. These two things, compassion and wisdom, are the original qualities of the Buddha, and also of human beings. Shakyamuni Buddha received enlightenment when he saw the morning star on the eighth of December. He said that it was a very strange, mysterious thing, because everything has the face of the Tathagata. He said, "I really recognized that this mind which I received from my enlightenment was not a mind which came from my training. It had been in existence

already, before me." Everything has Buddha nature. Shakyamuni Buddha said that it is our delusions and attachments which keep us from knowing that. If we could throw off those delusions and attachments which exist in our minds, we could become the Tathagata easily. So you have to make an effort to practice zazen in order to become a zero first. If we open the eye of our mind, we can see everything as it is—beautiful, new, and true. And everybody can recognize that everyone else is the Tathagata. Here let us quote again from Dogen Zenji. "To be enlightened by the numerous dharmas means casting off our body and mind completely." To rescue others and to be rescued ourselves are the two aspects; this is a very fundamental point of Buddhism. If we can achieve this, everything is the pure land.

I really appreciate this high mountain here at Tassajara, far from the town. You practice here for ninety days, and every day is like a sesshin. This is a very wonderful thing. In Japan there is nothing like this. The monasteries in Japan are just for training monks, not for laymen, and in the largest monastery there are no more than thirty monks. The main reason that monks come to monasteries in Japan is that they want a title; they want to become priests. I have been very sorry to see this.

Mahayana Buddhism places emphasis on enlightenment instead of just strict discipline. So it can be said that Mahayana Buddhism is the Bodhisattva's Buddhism, in other words, the layman's Buddhism, your Buddhism. Many of the bodhisattva statues, like Avalokiteshvara or Manjushri, are wearing earrings and have long hair. This means a layman's Buddhism.



*Mumon-roshi*

In the old days Buddhism spread from west to east—first from India to China, and then from China to Japan. When it went from India to China, it disappeared in India, and now that it is established in Japan, it has almost disappeared in China. Now it has come across the Pacific Ocean to the United States and Canada; now is the time for it to be realized here. American Buddhism is like a fresh, young tree which is in the process of growing stronger. Buddhism does not consist of the publication of propaganda about the Buddha. It is a teaching to help us find our true mind. I believe that the religion of the future will be the one which finds the root in ourselves, not outside.

I sincerely wish that each one of you might dig out your own Buddha nature through your practice, and that you might establish a new domain for Buddhism here in America. I am happy to see so many students here. Please continue your effort.

When Buddhism was introduced into China, its character was very much changed from what it had been in India, and in the same way the character of American Zen will be changed from what it has been in Japan. So I expect from you words which even Shakyamuni Buddha could not express—words even the Chinese and Japanese patriarchs could not say. I expect original words from you. But we have to be careful at this point. This word must be expressed by a person who comes to the same mind as Shakyamuni Buddha. In order to realize that, it is necessary to practice traditional zazen, the traditional Chinese and Japanese way, thoroughly. Then the original American way can be naturally realized. Otherwise we could not say that what you have is original Zen, it would just be a copy.

Probably Zen in Japan will disappear when we old monks die. That is why I want you to create your own new Zen.

Thank you very much.

