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Evening Sesshin Lecture by Roshi:

Almost all of you have not practiced Zen so long, but I think you have made great progress. This result is more than we expected. As I always say, for the beginner the most important point is posture. While you are working hard on your posture you will study many things besides your physical training. Physical training always follows mental training, even though you do not try to train your mentality. To put your mind in the right way is one interpretation of Zen. Or to resume your right mind is called Zen. Sama-pati means to resort to the right state of mind. Another interpretation is to put our mind in the right place. Physical training will result from the right orientation of your mind. If you are determined to overcome your pain your mind will follow your pain. But if your determination is not strong enough your mind will be in agitation. Zen is not struggling. When you practice zen your mind should be calm - even though you fight with your pain your mind should always be calm. It means your mind follows your pain like water, as water always follows the lower place. If your determination is strong enough, your mind becomes calm: following your physical condition and finding out many things. As long as you are struggling with your physical condition your mind will not find anything; your mind is shut; your mind is occupied so it will not be anything. When your mind is calm enough, even in your pain, you will find out many things. When your mind is in this state it is called a "well-oriented" mind. To put your mind in the right way is Zen. When your mind is calm you will find various tastes in what you eat. If your mind is not calm, you cannot eat anything you do not like.

When it is completely calm you will find various tastes, whatever you eat. So your mind will change according to circumstances, that is why old Zen masters were quite strict with disciples. If he was very strong and strict they would surrender - their minds would surrender. So you will find out many things in this kind of situation. You have to do many things which you do not like. That is a quite usual routine for us. As long as we want to stay sitting we have to find out some way to control ourselves, and soon we will find out how to control our mind.

Pickles are not something you boil. You eat pickles without boiling them. When I was a boy our master did not like to throw away food, not even pickles which became moldy. So we boiled the pickles and ate them. We tried them and said "this is not too bad": this is how to eat old moldy pickles. It was pretty good, so we served a boiled pickle to our master. He said, "What is it?" He did not know. We usually did extraordinary things so he thought "they must have done some extraordinary cooking." Anyway he did eat them. If we have surrendered to our master, we employ all our effort to control our mind so that we may exist under all conditions, extraordinary and ordinary.

This kind of training is necessary. For some of you it is time to just practice your breathing. In this activity your mind should follow your breathing in and out. We should not try to control your breathing with your mind, the mind follows the breathing. If you try to control your breathing by your mind, your mind will not be alert enough or soft enough to follow the subtle activity of your inhaling and exhaling. If your mind is soft enough to follow the subtle, delicate breathing, then you forget yourself in your breathing. So, that which exists is just your breathing. Your mind has completely become the breathing exercise. If you wish to attain this feeling, just to follow your inhaling and exhaling is the way. This is the way to do things according to our way. Follow the wave and drive the wave; follow the breathing and drive the breathing. It means to become one activity. On the other hand, if you try

to make your breathing become smooth, your breathing will not become smooth. If you just follow your breathing, your breathing will become more and more smooth, without trying to make it smooth. If you have this secret in your everyday life, you will find out many things which you did not notice before. This kind of activity will take place only with strong determination, or a strong way-seeking mind. As long as you are trying to do something, you can not do it. However, if you are determined to do it, you can do it. That determination is not working on your activity, but rather on your physical and mental existence. "I will not move whatever happens to me" - this kind of determination will work on every activity you do, and because of that determination your mind will become quite flexible. In Buddhism a flexible well trained mind is always appreciated. ①

This kind of training is called samadhi, or sama-pati in Sanskrit. In Chinese we call it dhyana or ch'an, or to-ji. To-ji is a well-balanced mind, like water, it gets through the smallest holes imaginable. So before you start practice, it is necessary to make some firm decision, by yourself. No one can force you to make this kind of decision.

As you have made pretty good progress, I want you to make this decision in your practice. It is not just for the practice of Zen, but also for enjoying your life. Without this kind of decision you cannot have a rich life. Your life will be rough and coarse if your mind is not flexible enough to accept things. We are lucky to be able to come together and practice Zen with so many persons. It is not so easy to practice with people in this way. Even though you want to do so, it is not always possible. Today we did it, but we do not know about tomorrow. If only we can make this decision there is no difficulty in our life, there is no problem. Because your determination is not strong enough you have a problem. Actually there is no problem or difficulty whatsoever in this world. Thank you very much.