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CASE 61: FUKETSU'S "ONE PARTICLE OF DUST"

ENGO'S INTRODUCTION

Setting up the dharma banner and establishing the dharma teaching — such is the task of the teacher of profound attainment. Distinguishing a dragon from a snake, black from white — that is what the mature master must do. Now let us put aside for a moment how to wield the life-giving sword and the death-dealing blade, and how to administer blows with the stick: tell me, what does the one who lords it over the universe say? See the following.

MAIN SUBJECT

Fuketsu said to the assembled monks, "If one particle of dust is raised, the state will come into being; if no particle of dust is raised, the state will perish."

Setchō (at a later time), holding up his staff, said to his disciples, "is there anyone among you who will live with him and die with him?"

SETCHŌ'S VERSE

Let the elders knit their brows as they will;
For the moment, let the state be established.
Where are the wise statesmen, the veteran generals?
The cool breeze blows; I nod to myself.*

Whether you are a layman or a monk, there is an important point that we should make clear. The point is to put more emphasis on big mind rather than small mind. In this way, more and more, you will develop your buddha mind which is big mind.

When you begin to practice in this way, experiencing big mind, you will feel that you are expressing it toward everything: your friend, your food, your household or your teacher. But actually, if you continue to practice, eventually you will not feel that you have big mind or are developing big mind. So that is called normal.

Big mind in contrast to small mind is not real big mind. Normal is actually the great mind. The reason we have Zen Center is so that we can practice our way and develop our great mind. But if you have the idea of Zen Center too much as an organization, basically there is something wrong. This point should be carefully examined.

There is a koan about Fuketsu Ensho (who was the fourth generation descendent of Rinzai). At one time he mounted the platform and said to his students, "If you pick up one speck of dust, the nation will become prosperous. If you don't, nothing will happen." That is the first part.

Setchō, commenting on this says, taking up a staff, "Is there anyone who will go through birth and death with you?" That is the whole story.

Fuketsu says, if you pick up a speck of dust, the nation will become prosperous. If you do not, nothing will happen. That is what Fuketsu said. Later when Fuketsu died, Setchō Zenji, taking up his staff said, "Is there anyone who will go through birth and death with you?" There is an appreciatory remark by the same zen master Setchō, but I want to explain the first part first.

To pick up a speck of dust means to do something like start a monastery or to start a zen group or zendo somewhere. But he didn't say it just that way. He said just to pick up a speck of dust. In the great universe or in great buddha land, to start a

*Case 61 from Katsuki Sekida, trans., *Two Zen Classics* (New York, Weatherhill, 1977), p. 314.

zendo is just to pick up a speck of dust. Not a big thing. It may be just a small thing; but, nevertheless, if you don't do it, nothing will happen. When he says the nation will be prosperous, he means zen students will prosper.

Many zen students come to Zen Center or go to some other zen center. Is this something meaningful or not? If something good happens, at the same time something bad will happen. Most likely if one good thing happens, ten or twelve or more than twenty bad things will happen. So we should think, when we pick up a speck of dust, whether it is a good or a bad thing to do. But if you don't, nothing will happen (laughing). This is also true. What will you do? Will you pick up a piece of dust or not pick up a piece of dust? Or will you leave everything as it is without saying anything?

Many people choose to let beings suffer, let them go in the wrong direction, saying, "that is not our problem. Let them go as they go: I cannot do anything with you." That is, "we will not pick up any dust." But if you want to do something with them, or if you want to help them, at the same time many bad things will follow. That is very interesting and very real. As Dōgen Zenji said, if you pick up one thing, there is birth and death, enlightenment and delusion, Buddha and sentient beings, and something good and something bad. So we call it Genjokōan. That is our koan to solve, the actual koan we have.

The purpose of Buddhism is not to establish Buddha's teaching, or buddhist groups, but to help people to find their own way when they cannot find their own way. So Buddha gives them some warning: 'If you do not follow the right path, you will be lost.' That is the only reason Buddha left his teaching for human beings. So if all sentient beings follow the right path, there is no need to pick up anything. But some buddhists will make a big mistake. They try to establish something for the sake of Buddhism in its narrow sense.

The real purpose of Buddhism is to bring us to the point where we do not need Buddha's teaching or Zen Center even. Without a teacher we can follow our own way. That is best. That is the goal of Buddhism. The goal of Buddhism is to bring about the right human life where there is no Buddhism. So to develop our human life to the point where there is no need to pick up anything is why we make our effort. And personally, that is why the more we make effort, the more we have trouble. It is because we always try to pick up or establish something in its small sense (chuckling).

If we establish something just to make more trouble, it doesn't make sense. So the most important point of our practice is to always try to do something with big mind. When you do something with big mind, if there is no need to do it, you will not do it. Only when you have to do it will you do it.

Setchō's appreciatory word for that is, "Old men will be unable to relax their eyebrows as they would otherwise." Old zen masters with tense eyebrows will say, 'Ah, silly boys starting Zen Center at Tassajara; they shouldn't do that' (laughing). If we do not start Zen Center, they can relax their eyebrows. They may feel better.

That is Setchō's appreciatory word, and he says, "Tentatively, I will establish the foundation for the nation even though old men may make a face; you must excuse me. Setchō continues his appreciatory word saying, "But wait a moment, where are the crafty officials and great generals now? Only the pure minds blowing over ten thousands of miles know their whereabouts."

The day may come when we no longer need any generals or *shoguns* or zen masters. but in the meantime, to bring about that kind of peaceful situation for people, we will tentatively make some foundation. We will pick up a speck of dust.

This is the actual Genjokoan. It is the most real koan for us. This is what we are doing at Tassajara. We have already picked up something. But some old zen master will make a face, knowing that we dare to pick up something. So again, it is good to fulfill your responsibility and help establish Zen Center; but if there is the slightest idea of self in it, you cannot see Buddha's face. It is no longer with you.

As you like Zen Center so much, you will easily be involved in a kind of self-centered idea. To think about only yourself is a self-centered idea, of course; but to think only about Zen Center is a kind of small mind. Zen Center is just a small speck of dust compared with big buddha land. As Dōgen Zenji says in his *Fukan-zazengi*: "If your purpose in zazen misses the point just a little bit, then the separation will be as great as heaven and earth." Then our zazen will not make any sense. We should be able to give up Zen Center when it is not necessary. But I can't say when you can resign from Zen Center. I cannot say it so easily. But each one of us should be ready for it.

We should not be proud of our faculties or our personality or our bright smart mind. When you have good practice, that is also the enemy of Buddhism. You should not pursue the buddha way for the sake of change, or for your own personal interest. We should not seek for some advantage in our everyday life. Whether people like what you do or not; if it is necessary, you should do it.

So if you pick up a speck of dust, people may not like it. But if you think it is necessary, you should do it. That is our spirit. You should not do it so that people will admire you or because it will help you lead a successful life in the future. What we are doing is not necessarily what we will be doing forever. It is just a tentative good means to help people. To make the best effort in our everyday life is actually buddhist practice.

The way we extend big mind is limitless. So we say, to establish Buddha's way with defilement. Whatever we do is delusion. Knowing that it is delusion, to do something, to pick up a speck of dust is the bodhisattva's way, and at the same time the buddhist way. So we do not expect anything. Right now what we do seems necessary, but tomorrow we don't know.

We will be happy when people no longer want us. We will be very happy. That is real big mind. We wear robes. The reason we wear robes is maybe in order to take off robes. Unless you put on a robe, you cannot take it off. We wear a robe in the same way that we pick up a speck of dust. Even if it is a speck of dust, we must pick it up. If it is Buddha's robe, there is no reason why we should not wear it.

But Buddha's robe is a problem robe. At any time you can put on the robe. When all sentient beings realize they are Buddha, you can take off the robe. If you wear it with some idea of wearing it forever, since it is Buddha's robe, that kind of idea doesn't make any sense.

Our practice looks very rigid and formal. but the reason we observe such a rigid formal practice is to acquire absolute freedom.

People may say it might be better not to be involved in such a rigid practice. It is very difficult to discuss Buddhism with such people. They do not know Genjokoan, the koan of our everyday life. They do not know that day after day, moment after moment, we are creating bad karma. I have to accept it. Even in Tassajara, we are eating eggs, you know. They are living beings. Eggs are not dead. Each grain is a living being. You are killing them, but you have to eat them knowing they are not dead. We can do it because we choose big mind instead of small mind. Small mind will object on the ground of Buddhist precepts, but big mind will accept things as it is.

So whatever it is, according to Dōgen Zenji, it is a big koan. He carefully picked out the great koan of reality, the great koan of our life. He set up a great stage for human beings. Whatever we do on the stage is Buddha's act which will continue forever. If you have a good understanding of the great koan, whatever you do makes sense. But when you are only involved in small mind, it doesn't make sense. You cannot stay on the stage of the great koan. You are not alive anymore; just moving around in your coffin; the real human being is not there. That is actually Dōgen Zenji's great koan.

Starting from the practice of big mind, the practice will be developed in our activity together, like Zen Center or like Buddha's sangha. We will show a good example to other groups when we really follow Buddha's path and when the meaning of our life is there. In short, we shouldn't be bothered so much by the idea of good or bad. We should be concerned that our practice is sincere and supported by big mind. This is the most important point. If you have this, your mind will be constant and peaceful. By experience we know that after some ecstasy, some discouragement will follow. So if you know that, you know how important it is to have big constant mind, and you can enjoy the effort you make: That kind of mind will always keep you young and happy.

We shouldn't mind so much what will happen in the future, but we should be concerned about this moment. Whether you are happy or not is important. If you are following the right path, the quality of your life doesn't differ from the quality of Buddha's life. Of course, there is some difference in its breadth or in its lastingness or in its maturity; but the quality of practice is the same. As with a fan, whether it is large or small, a fan is a fan, same quality. So our practice may not be so good, but the quality of the practice is the same.

When we are supported by big mind and do not lose our way in small mind, small practice, that is Dōgen Zenji's Genjokoan. It is koan on a big scale where everyone has great freedom from the usual small activity.

So the goal of practice is to not have any teaching or teacher or sentient beings; where there is no Buddhism and no Buddha. But if you think that without any training you can have that kind of life, that is a big mistake. You do not know what you are doing. When you say you don't need Buddhism, then you are either a great fool or a very selfish person. Don't you think so? Maybe a great fool, to be a great fool is better than to be a selfish person. Even though Buddha spoke about freedom, what Buddha meant and what you may mean is hardly comparable. You say freedom and nature, but you don't understand what freedom is and what nature is.

You say nature, but your understanding of nature is not true nature. It is a kind of home-made nature, cooked up in your kitchen (laughing). It looks like nature, but it is not truly nature. True nature may be a nature which will ignore almost all living beings. Human beings will easily be ignored by this great nature. Whether we exist on earth or not is not a big problem.

When we realize our nature, it can be a big problem, but for someone to say that all you have to do is to follow your own narrow view of nature and that is freedom, then, in the same way, you will be ignored by the sun or the various stars in space.

If you realize that you cannot be ignored by the universe even though you are small, then you realize who you are. At the same time, you realize that you are alive because you are supported by some truth. Unless you are supported by some truth and follow that truth, you cannot be free.

Thank you very much.

