

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
ONE-DAY *SESSHIN* LECTURE: 1 PM
Saturday, August 28, 1965
San Francisco

Tape operator: This is the beginning of the—it will be that we missed this morning's lecture at 9, which was a good one, and this lecture is at—will be at one o'clock, and it's the—this is a one-day *sesshin*, August 28.

Suzuki-rōshi: Confucius said the most visible is the something invisible. There are many proverb—Oriental proverb the same kind in Japanese: "A firefly, without voice, burns its body with enthusiasm, rather than cicada, which is noisy."¹ This is the same—same meaning. Firefly burns itself by its enthusiasm, rather than noisy cicada [laughs]. Do you know insect cicada?

This kind of idea is very Oriental. You say Japanese culture—*shibui*. *Shibui* means "not conspicuous," just common, and not colorful. And it express deep taste. I think those idea is originated our practice. Any tradi- [partial word]—if you want to keep the tradition or culture or heritage, this point is very important. We say this kind of effort is to accumulate unknown virtue or unknown merit: to do something where nobody notice it; to do something fundamental; to devote ourselves mostly [to] the fundamental work.

To set up the foundation is the most valuable work, and if you want to devote yourself, choose some fundamental work rather than visible conspicuous work. We—we have to work with far-reaching plan or far-reaching eyes. The far-reaching eyes, we say *kenshiki*. This is very important word in Japanese. *Kenshiki*. *Kenshiki* is to have far-reaching idea, not temporal work.

Even though we compete [complete?] our merit in realm of visible world, your work will be neglected before you die even. So we have to work for our descendant—for future generation. And we must be proud of doing something which people usually do not realize its value. When you work—devote yourself in this kind of work, you have eternal life. But if you are occupied by near-sighted idea, you will lose your value, and you will not find out the composure of yourself.

In Japan, many and many religious heroes devoted themselves [to] this kind of work. So they were confined—they confined—confound themselves in limited work. We say—do you know Japanese barrel—barrel?—or, you know, in which we keep—a container for *shōyu* sauce,

¹ The *Wind Bell* version reads: "The silent firefly, unlike the noisy cicada, glows with light" [1965, IV (6), p. 3].

you know, made of wood [laughs] with bamboo ring tied up—wood—piece of—it is made of piece of woods. My—my pronunciation is not good. What is—"barrel"?

Students: "Barrel."

Suzuki-rōshi: Huh?

Students: "Barrel."

Suzuki-rōshi: [Laughs.] That is very difficult to say for me. Anyway, the piece of wood does not, you know, work as a container without bamboo circle or bamboo ring [hoop]. If—if we have ring, you know, on our head, we can work. But if we have no ring on our head for ourselves, we will lose the meaning of existence. If you are very clever and capable, you can do anything you like, and people will ask you many things. But [laughs] if you do various things—if you try to accomplish many things, you will not accomplish nothing [laughs]. You will be just a tool of people. If—in that way, if you can really help—if you can help others completely, it may be all right. But if you want to help others in its true sense, it is better to devote yourself for some limited thing.

If you help them when you [they] asked, they will feel very helpful [helped] at that moment—at that time. This kind of help is rather superficial help and casual, you know, help. If you want to help people, you have to devote yourself for some particular thing, and you have to help others with full confidence in your work. Then you can help people spiritually and physically.

But if you try to help superficially, that help is—will sometime or most of time spoil people without [laughs] helping them. But you will spoil them—just spoil them. And mutual help of this kind is—will result [in] depravity.

And so it is the same thing with religion, even though you compare various religion and you take good points of—points from various religion. But if you seek for too much honey from various flower, which is not necessary for you, you will be spoiled by honey. A little bit honey is enough for us. There is no need to be greedy. If it is true, a little bit [of] truth—a faint idea of truth is enough. And you should complete—devote yourself to the truth you have—you—you saw, completely. Then you will find out the true meaning of the truth. It is not matter of which is good or bad. It is matter of whether you devote yourself to the truth completely or not.

This kind of idea is very special to Japanese culture or Oriental culture. In *Lotus Sūtra*, Buddha said to light up—or to lit up one—just one

corner--one corner, not the whole—all the world. Just to lit up—to make it clear just where you are. *Ichigu wo terasu*.² *Ichigu* is "one corner." *Terasu* is "to lit up" or "to shine" one corner. This is very valuable point—important point in our practice.

It does not mean to be, you know, to be negative, or to be narrow-minded, or to be sectarian. It is a way it should be. And everything exist in that way. Bamboo cannot be a pine tree at the same time [laughs]. Bamboo is always bamboo, so bamboo is valuable. Bamboo and—mixture [laughs] of bamboo and pine tree [will not] serve—serve for anything, because bamboo is straight, [and] pine tree is crooked. So bamboo is valuable, and pine tree is valuable.

So there is no need for us to be famous or to be useful. First of all, we should be—each one should be he himself. Then we will find our world very convenient. If we try to be the most famous, and most useful, and most powerful, everyone will lose the true meaning of our existence. So we say, "When you become yourself, Zen become Zen." When you become you [laughs]—when bamboo is bamboo, that is Zen. When a tree is a tree, that is Zen. If so, we have to realize our inmost nature as a being, or inmost request of ourselves. Inmost request works for every existence in the same way, but as each existence [is] different from the other existence, even though the inmost request is the univer- [partial word]—is universal, the way of expression should be different.

The other day, we Sōtō followers completed a big building³ at Sōji-ji Temple for the memory of the Fifth Patriarch from—in Japan. Dōgen is the First Patriarch, and fifth one—fourth one we call—is Keizan-zenji.⁴ And the fifth one is Gasan-zenji.⁵ Gasan-zenji had many good disciples. Sometime we count twenty-five. Sometime we count ten. Anyway, he has many—he had many disciples.

When Keizan-zenji saw the Fourth Patriarch—Gasan-zenji—the Fifth Patriarch saw the Fourth Patriarch—Gasan-zenji—Gasan-zenji—although Gasan-zenji was very good, but Keizan-zenji did not allow his transmission. But—and he gave him some question: "Have you seen the double moon?" Double moon.

He couldn't [laughs]—he couldn't understand what did he meant. And he studied and studied and studied for many years—many and many years. And he could [not] understand what did his master meant by "double moon." Although our inmost request or nature is the same,

² See also SR-69-12-01.

³ The original transcript and *Wind Bell* version added "Taisodo," which should have read "Daisodō" ("Great Monks' Hall"). It is the largest building at Sōji-ji.

⁴ Keizan Jōkin (1268–1325).

⁵ Gasan Joseki (1276–1325).

our way of expression should be different—it should be double. It is, you know—my—when I devote myself to my inmost request, you will understand how I—how hard I make my effort to express it. Here we have mutual understanding, but the way you express and I express is not the same. Because it is not the same and it cannot be the same, we can respect each other's effort, and at the same time we can feel—we can tell—we can realize how difficult it is. That is mutual understanding. Here we have double moon, not single, not the same moon. You may say the moon we see here in America [and] the moon they will see at—in Japan may be the same—is the same, but it is not the same. It is double [laughs]. Oh, I don't know how much—how many moons we will see, but the feeling of the seeing—observing the moon is the same. Even though sometime when we see the moon, we will see with tear. Sometime we will see the moon with joy. But the moon is the same. Here we see the double moon. It should be double, but the moon is the same.

So as long as you are caught by the single moon which is always same to everybody, we cannot see the true moon. You are seeing the painted moon which is always [laughs] same. There is no meaning to it.

We say, "a white bird—bird—a white bird—a white bird in the snow—in the snow—in snow."⁶ You cannot see the white bird in snow, but still bird exist. When we devote ourselves in true practice, our practice is not visible. But this invisible effort—accumulation of those invisible effort will build up your character, and you will obtain the power to be a master of the surrounding. As long as you are chasing after just visible thing, you will never understand the meaning of our life. This is how we devote ourselves to our way.

Student A: I still do not have the general idea. I can see that if we look at the moon, projecting our own emotion, we won't see the moon. On the other hand, we must be one with the moon and must be fair to it in a special way so that it has particular meaning to us, and we experience the moon ourselves. Could you clarify?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. I understand your point, you know. To see—if you want to see double moon—the, you know, the power or—of—excu- [partial word]—let me put in this way. When you—unless you have eyes to see the double moon, you cannot see it. As long as you observe the moon [as] just an object—an object of your eyes, you cannot see it. If you want to see the double moon, you must have—you must build up your character and you must have the power to observe the double moon. In other word, you ha- [partial word]—

⁶ Possibly a reference to Dōgen-zenji's poem *Raihai* ("Worship"): "A white heron hiding itself in the snowy field, where even the winter grass cannot be seen." (Steven Heine, *The Zen Poetry of Dōgen*, 1997, p. 117.)

through your practice obtaining your power to observe it, you can see the double moon. As long as you just seek for—just figure out what is double moon—is this moon is—is this moon—is this way of observing moon is right or wrong in this [?]? You cannot see it. When you are quite sure, you know, in observing the moon, you can see the double moon. Even though you say, "That is just [single] moon, not double moon," I may say, "For you it may be the single moon [laughs], but for me it is double," I may say. If someone say, "It is double," I may say, "No, it is single." [Laughs, laughter.]

It doesn't matter to me whether it is double or single, because I am quite sure about my eyes. So when it is—when you are quite sure with yourself, or when you own your eyes as a sense organ—as your sense organ, you can see the double moon. But when—as long as you are enslaved by your eyes, you are—you cannot trust your eyes [laughs]. So if someone says that is a double or single [laughs], you will, you know, wonder. You cannot trust your eyes. Do you understand?

This kind of strength can be attained—[partial word]—acquired by your own effort, not other's effort. Even though I explain it one thousand times, it will not help you unless you yourself make your effort to—to be sure about yourself. Before you believe in yourself you cannot, you know, see the double moon. Actually double or single doesn't matter [laughs]. That is double moon.

So as long as you are proud of your practice—to be proud of your practice is—you are still relying on something, someone. Because you rely on others—rely on the reputation, you [are] proud of [laughs] yourself. If you are quite independent, you know, you are not proud of anything of yourself. So the Fifth Patriarch in Japan [was] rather proud of his deep understanding of Buddhism. So Keizan-zenji said—did not accept him, you know [laughs]. Naturally [?] you have—you are—you cannot see the double moon. When you forget yourself, you have full strength. [Laughs.] Do you understand? You understand this psychology.

But it does not mean to be lazy or to become wood or stone. That is zazen—Zen. You are alive, and your mind is not working. But you are fully—you are in full activity but your activity is not rely on anything too. That is, you know, zazen. Okay? [Laughs.] Did you understand?

Student B: I—I am curious to know—

Suzuki-rōshi: Don't say "curious to know." [Laughing.]

Student B: —whether or not you are [6-8 words]. How did the Fifth

Patriarch become the patriarch if he cannot see the moon [?]. I think the Christian mystic formative [?] thought, which was similar to Robert Warren—

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh.

Student B: —that some disciples and patriarchs and masters have to be certified for their vision.

Suzuki-rōshi: Certified?

Student B: Certified—

Suzuki-rōshi: By?

Student B: —verified by a higher authority before impersonating [representing?] the temple.

Suzuki-rōshi: Before you—you have full, you know, confidence in yourself, you will not be certified by anyone. Even though someone say you are good, it doesn't mean anything. So your confidence is first. So there is no other way to be confidential [confident] in yourself. We are not talking about something very difficult. If we are quite sincere with ourself and— -selves, and if we are conscientious—not conscientious, but if we are aware of our idle practice and ashamed of it, that's the way. Even though we are not perfect, if we are aware of our imperfection, that is good, very good. That is very good.

And after trying to polish ourselves until we think it is—we are allowed—we will be allowed by our patriarchs, by Buddha, and by our teacher, then you are pretty good—not perfect, but pretty good.

Student C: Sensei, what does *sashu* [*sic*] mean?

Suzuki-rōshi: Hmm?

Student C: What is *sashu*? The sign says, "Walk in *sashu*."

Suzuki-rōshi: *Sesshin*?

Student C: *Sha—sha—*

Suzuki-rōshi: *Shashu*.

Student C: *Shashu*.

Suzuki-rōshi: This is *shashu* [probably gestures].

Student C: Is this also a symbol of the cosmic world [1-2 words]?⁷

Suzuki-rōshi: Oh, I don't know. I am sorry [laughs, laughter].

Student C: Well, [4-8 words]. And he said it was like the cosmic world, and I was wondering its history [1-2 words]—

Suzuki-rōshi: I don't know. Actu- [partial word]—really, I don't know. [Laughs, laughter.] I get accustomed to this way, you know, pretty early in my age. So I didn't think what it was [laughs]. I will—I will find out by dictionary, but there is usually—there is many interpretation to it [laughing]. We may forget.

Student D: Reverend Suzuki, I've noticed that you have it kind of like this, instead of—

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh. That's—if I do it like this, it's not good [laughter]. Should be like that.

Student D: I've noticed it's harder to do it like that. I've been trying to do it that way.

Suzuki-rōshi: But it should be like this. This is no good. Maybe when I am talking, my fingers may be like this. This is not good. Should be like this.

Student D: Are your forearms on your legs this way?

Suzuki-rōshi: Bishop Yamada told us to do like this, but for someone this is better. But for someone [others], I think this is better—not to rest your hands on your side.

Student E: Reverend Suzuki? In the *Lankāvatāra-sūtra* they described a buddha as one who controls his outflows. Would you say a few words about that? Or they also used the phrase "non-leakage," which was hard to get [?].

Suzuki-rōshi: Non-? Non-what?

Student E: Non-leakage, you know.

Suzuki-rōshi: Leaky?

Student E: When a bottle leaks, you know, it comes out the cracks—overflows. Would that contribute to the—to the [1 word] around the

⁷ The student appears to shift from discussing the *mudrā* of the hands during *shashu* to the cosmic *mudrā* (the position of the hands during *zazen*).

head—the ring around the barrel that you were talking about?

Suzuki-rōshi: [Laughing.] I don't know. That is quite Japanese expression: *tangawa honryu*.⁸ Maybe so. We have many ways of—expression for "one truth." I couldn't understand actually what you said just know. What did you mean? One?

Student E: Well, when I am doing zazen, it seems as though sometimes I have this experience of—of immed- [partial word]—of my —of a non-outflowing, you know, that I'm—it's all staying right within me—

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm. Oh, "outflowing." I see.

Student E: Yeah. Instead of, you know—when you see—when I see—I feel like I'm looking outward, and I feel—oh, like—so when I'm doing zazen, though, that will drop back inside.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student E: And I thought perhaps this is what they meant by "non-outflowing": being able to control the—the outflow of your energy or—

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm. Yeah. "Outflow." It is—that is opposite, you know, to our way. Outflow. Comes out—your energy from your—whatever it is, body or mind. You should be one thought [?] or existence when you sit. There is no outside or no inside when you sit. Can you—do you accept this expression?

Student E: Yes. Mm-hmm.

Suzuki-rōshi: So outflowing or—it is not even to see inward. It is just to sit. No inside or no outside. Just one existence.

Source: City Center transcript entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997. Transcript checked against tape and made verbatim by Bill Redican (7/12/01). An edited version of most of this lecture was printed in *Wind Bell*, September 1965, IV (No. 6), pp. 3–5.

⁸ Phonetic only. Suzuki-rōshi did not understand the question, so the translation may not correspond to the question (e.g., it may be a translation of "one truth").