

**Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi**  
**Sesshin Lecture: GENJŌ-KŌAN, PARAGRAPHS 1-3**  
**Sunday Morning, March 13, 1966**  
**Lecture A**  
**Sōkō-ji Temple, San Francisco**

Good morning. This lecture is for advanced student in his practice, but I think this lecture will help you even though you haven't advanced practice. And at least some day you will understand this lecture. This is the gist of Dōgen's teaching, and various offshoot are the 95 fascicle of—fascicles of his work. This is basic teaching—basic teaching of Dōgen.

And we have finished the first paragraph, anyway:<sup>1</sup>

*When all things are Buddhist ... [gap in tape of 21 sec.]*

**Tape Operator:** Testing. *[Blows on microphone.]*

**Suzuki-rōshi:** [phenomena, we have enlightenment and ignorance, studies, life and death, buddhas and people. When all things are without self, we have no ignorance, no enlightenment—]<sup>2</sup> ... *no buddhas, no people, no life and [no] death. The Buddhist way ... [gap in tape of 18 sec.]*

*[Operator blows and taps on the microphone.]*

**Suzuki-rōshi:** [is beyond being and non-being. Therefore we have life and death, ignorance and enlightenment, people and buddhas. However, flowers—] ... *fall with our attachment, and weeds grows—grow with our detachment.*

I can visualize Dōgen-zenji, you know, who is just standing watching some flowers. He liked plum blossom very much. *[Gap in tape of 15 sec. See SR-66-08-15-A, p. 4, for a similar comment.]*

*[Operator blows and taps on the microphone.]*

**Tape operator:** One, one, two, three, four, five, one six seven eight

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<sup>1</sup> Suzuki-rōshi is reading and commenting on *Shōbōgenzō* "Genjō-kōan."

<sup>2</sup> The missing segments quoted here are from Eihei Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* "Genjō-kōan," following the translation by Kazuaki Tanahashi with Robert Aitken that appeared in: (1) *Shōbōgenzō Genjō Kōan: An Analytic Study* (unpublished manuscript, San Francisco Zen Center); (2) *Wind Bell*, 1967, VI (2-4), pp. 60-62, and (3) the *[Honolulu] Diamond Sangha [Newsletter]*. In the fragments that are audible on the tape of this lecture, Suzuki-rōshi is clearly following the Tanahashi/Aitken version.

nine ten eleven twelve.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** ... in wheat, which is strong enough to come out through frost and snow. He is just watching it. And he is—this statement covers all of our life, and all of our history—human history, and Buddhist philosophy. This fascicle, from beginning to end, [is] based on this paragraph, so this is the most important point—the point of whole fascicle.

What I noticed here, you know, in observing your practice, you are not completely involved in practice—our practice. Your practice is part of [laughs] you—just a small part of your life. One hour or two hours in 12—24 hours [laughs]. That is your practice. So instead of practicing zazen here two hours, you think you can do something—if there is something good, better—it may be better to do something [laughs]—something else instead of practicing zazen. This is—I think you [laughs]—still you have this kind of attitude.

But Buddhism is not—our practice is not like that. Our practice—if we are not completely involved in our practice, that is not our practice. It is not one hour of 24 hours. So if you—if I scold you, you may [laughs]—you may go out. If I give you some candy, you will stay here [laughs, laughter]. I dare say you are impossible [laughs, laughter]. You are just like child [laughs], because, you know, you lack in—you lack in your confidence to study it as a whole life study. Actually, you cannot get out of Buddhism. It is impossible to get out of it, but still you think you can, you know, go out from Buddhism, go out from Zen—from this zendō. Actually, once you enter, that's all [laughs, laughter]. Some day you'll have to come back. I know that [laughs]. I myself tried to get out of it many times [laughs], but I couldn't.

So sometime I may say, "You are bad now" [laughs]. But what is bad? Who is bad? Someone who is good is bad now [laughs]. Sometime I say, "You are very good." But someone is not good enough is good enough [laughs]. Same thing, isn't it? Doesn't make any sense—"good or bad."

You—in Japan, young people say, "This is absolutely good." It just emphasize—adjective [adverb] emphasizing good. But when we say "absolutely good," it is same thing as "absolutely bad" [laughs]. If it is absolutely good, that is absolutely bad. And if—when we say "absolutely good," it is—it does not mean good or bad. It is something more than good or bad. So in this sense, absolutely good is absolutely bad.

But sometime we say, comparatively, "This is good, this is bad." This is necessary—this two way of understanding of life is necessary. We

have—sometime we have to compare something to the other, and we should say this is comparatively good. Or there will not be—no need to say "comparatively" always [laughs], but in this sense, we say, most of us—most of time, we say "comparatively good or bad." This is very important, but this comparatively good or bad life is created a lot of difficulties now. This comparison is the basic attitude towards science and philosophy and intellectualizing our life. When you intellectualize our life, eventually it will end in dead end. That is why we have difficulties in our time. Moreover, originally it is just comparatively good. We are comparatively good than some people. That's all. But nowadays we say, "Absolutely good. This is absolutely good." Here is the big mistake, you know. When you say [so], even by—even emotionally, that is big, big mistake. Nothing is absolutely good.

When you say "absolutely good," it does not mean good anymore. It is same thing as bad. If you understand—if you use it, or if you feel it in this way, when you say "absolutely good," that is all right. But when you say, "absolutely good" emphasizing something comparatively good, that is big mistake. You are forcing your way to others. You are deprived of freedom from others. This is big, big mistake. But, in this—in next paragraph, Dōgen-zenji says:

*What we move—that we move ourselves and understand all things is ignorance. That things advance and understand themselves is enlightenment.*

Here he is talking in the complete understanding of life. What is good? What is ignorance and what is enlightenment? What is good and what is bad?

We say "ignorance" or "enlightenment" without knowing what is ignorance and what is enlightenment. But when we say "ignorance" or "enlightenment," we should know what is ignorance in its true sense and what is enlightenment in its true sense. If you think what is ignorance in—in its true sense, when we—we say criticizing something that is—move ourselves toward something, you know, and criticize something, good or bad, that is ignorance. "That things advance and understand themselves is enlightenment." But when you—we have no particular concrete idea of good and bad—good or bad, and leave—and expose ourselves to their criticism and accept their criticism, that is enlightenment.

We may do many things intellectually, or intentionally, or in realm of consciousness, but those activity—most of those activity is more unconscious activity rather than conscious activity. And what is—which is true expression of yourself—conscious one or unconscious one [laughs]? Of course, 99 percent of your activity is unconsciously, and

that is true expression of yourself. If you say, "I am right," that is, you know, a small part of your expression—just small part of your expression. So you cannot, you know, force yourself to someone else. As you understand yourself, we don't know what we are exactly. "We don't know" is right.

So if you understand in this way, that is enlightenment. Those two statement—ignorance—about ignorance and enlightenment, is—are based on one big understanding of life. Enlightenment is something which will happen to us sometime, and ignorance is something which will come over to us sometime [laughs], but we are big box [laughs] including enlightenment and ignorance.

So in our everyday life, there is enlightenment and ignorance. You cannot [laughs] escape from ignorance [laughs] to attain enlightenment, because enlightenment is not somewhere else within yourself. So actually enlightenment is, as he says, to be—to know what is ignorance is enlightenment. And ignorance is to—to be ignorant about enlightenment is ignorance [laughs]. Something good is something bad. If something bad—if I say something is good, that something should be bad [laughs]. Because—it is same thing if I say, "Good morning. You came in time this morning [laughs]. That's very good [laughs]." That means he does not come [laughs, laughter] on time usually [laughs, laughter]. If I scold him, "Why didn't [laughs, laughter] you come on time?" It means he comes every—almost every morning on time [laughs]. So it's same thing [laughs]. Maybe sometime opposite [laughs]? So we should not be disturbed by the word [?] of ignorance or enlightenment. Anyway, if we understand ourselves completely, there is no special thing as enlightenment or ignorance. Ignorance is enlightenment [laughs], enlightenment is ignorance.

*It is buddhas who understand ignorance.*

You see, he says, "It is buddhas who understand ignorance"—his own ignorance [laughs]. He is buddha when he understand—when he enlightened about his ignorance, and it is people who are ignorant of enlightenment. So there is no difference between buddha and people—same thing, same human being. But buddha is someone who understand our ignorance, and we are ignorant of enlightenment. But, if we—I say in this way, then there will not be no need to practice zazen [laughs]. If we are buddha—if we are same as buddha, why we should practice zazen? This is—when you understand this philosophy or statement, just intellectually, you will have this problem.

But anyway he says:

*It is people who are ignorant of enlightenment. Further, there*

*are those who are enlightened about enl- [partial word]—above enlightenment, and those who are ignorant—ignorant of ignorance.*

"Enlightenment above enlightenment." If you retain the idea—consciousness of enlightenment, you know, that is not good enough. So you should, you know, go beyond enlightenment. So if you attain enlightenment, that enlightenment means enlightenment about—above enlightenment of ignorance, you know. So eventually you will go towards ignorance, you know. When you say, "I have attained enlightenment consciously," that consciousness is delusion. About what you attained enlightenment? You attained enlightenment about ignorance. What you, you know, grasp is ignorance [laughs], not enlightenment. There is nothing to understand, you know, but ignorance for enlightened person. There is nowhere to go—enlightenment or ignorance [laughs]. So if you attain enlightenment, you have to, you know, go back to ignorance because there is no other way to—for you to go [laughs]. So if you attain enlightenment, you have to go back to ignorance.

So "enlightenment above enlightenment": conscious enlightenment is not good enough. So you have to give up enlightenment. If—when at the moment you attain enlightenment, or when you actually attain enlightenment, what you grasp is ignorance—is your ignorance or our own ignorance. When you understand the ignorance of yourself—how ignorant you have been [laughs]—that is enlightenment.

So it is impossible for enlightened person to forget about enlightenment. It is impossible because you have found something which you had—you have had [laughs]. So how can you forget about enlightenment? You should remember. You should abide in enlightenment forever with people who have same nature as his own.

So someone who thinks "I attained enlightenment," although most of them haven't enlightenment—attain enlightenment yet, "I am only person who attained enlightenment" [laughs]. That is big mistake. That is just delusion. He has nothing—he didn't grasp anything but delusion. It will soon vanished away from his memory—from his experience.

So even though we looks like doing same thing with people, there is some difference between the people who attain enlightenment and who haven't. But for enlightened one, constant—constant effort will be continued with people wherever he is.

*And those who are ignorant of ignorance.*

"Ignorant of ignorance" means people eventually will attain

enlightenment. Those people ignorant—who are ignorant of his ignorance is—just now—is just ignorance—ignorant of his own ignorance. So he doesn't feel that he has same quality or same nature with—as enlightened person. That's all, but eventually, as long as his—he has same nature as enlightened person, he will—once he become enlightened of his ignorance, he will be saved.

*When buddhas are truly buddhas, they are not necessarily aware of themselves as buddhas.*

You see? So when it is—if so—if there is someone who attained enlightenment and go back to ignorance, and if there are someone, although he is ignorant of ignorance, eventually he will become enlightened of his ignorance. Then it is not—they are not necessarily—it is not necessarily aware of their—themselves as buddha. If so, you know, it is not necessary, even, to become aware of his buddha-nature. Anyway, we have it. The difference is those who attained enlight- [partial word]—who is awakened by his true nature, or he is ignorant of ignorance. That is the difference.

So strictly speaking, it is not always necessary to be aware of ourselves to be buddha. Same thing [laughs]. That is why I say you have come back to here [laughs]. Even though you are thousand miles away from this zendō, you are included [laughs] in this zendō. As our understanding is like this, whether you are here or not is not the point. Do you understand?

However, you may ask me what is the purpose of practice? Anyway, you, you know, I think you are relieved. You have forgotten all what you had on your shoulders now. Actually, there is nothing to do for you. There is nothing especially to do for you. But then why Dōgen-zenji strived for this point, for many and many years, until he attained enlightenment in China and dropped off his idea of mind and body? It is so, you know, but, as he says, flowers fall with our attachment, and weeds grows with our detachment. In spite of—in spite of detachment [attachment], flower will go—will fall.

So—this is life, actually. And if you do not try to understand this point fully, those, you know, profound teaching is nothing to—for us. So actually, even though he says in this way, actually it is necessary to—to practice—to continue our practice in realm of duality as unenlightened people. We are—we should be all unenlightened people, and we should strive for enlightenment. We should do that. While you are striving for it, you will really understand what he meant. Intellectually you have understood it already. Intellectually. But then you—you can remain doing nothing [laughs] in sunny place eating something which you want? Can you do that? Or can you always lie down in your bed [laughs] reading some interesting stories? Can you

do that? No, we cannot. For a while you can do something, you know. That is [what] most people are doing. For a while I can read something. And if we [are] tired of reading, we will go out, or we will work. And if we earn some money to be lazy [laughs], we will come back from work. So continue your life in this way. You will have no result. You will not find out any meaning of life.

Someday or sometime you will have deep regret with what you did—you have been doing, and sometime you will be disgusted with yourself [laughs]. And you feel disable to help people, or disabled to love anyone. You know, you will be isolate—completely isolated from this world.

So you may care for something good—something which is absolutely true [laughs], and try to escape from this world, or commit suicide. This is what we will do [with] our life. But there is the way to resume this kind of deep—deeper understanding of life and work with people without any prejudice, without any discrimination, and help with each other with mutual understanding. The only way is to be cooperated—to share our joy of deeper understanding of life with people, and to participate worldly life more sincere effort. Then you will have—you will be a perfect human being as well as perfect Buddha's disciple.

When I went to Palo Alto—some new student who was studying Orient—Indian philosophy by Doctor McKarr [?]: "I read many books about Zen, and I know the term they use—'oneness of the duality.' But actually, what is [laughs] 'oneness of the duality'?" he said—he asked me. I had no time to [laughs] discuss about the oneness of the duality [laughs] [with someone] who understand intellectually pretty well what is [laughs] oneness of the duality.

But—I wanted to help him, you know, but I s- [partial word]—I knew that it is impossible to help him immediately. Until he suffer, until he try to find out what is oneness of the duality, it may take pretty long time. By long effort, his understanding will, you know, be better and better [laughs, laughter] until, "Oh, this is oneness of the duality." [Laughs.] How you reach this kind of understanding is to suffer in the realm of, you know, actual life, or to think more about our life, or to practice zazen. One of the two.

So to practice Zen in noisy place itself is a way—this is very dualistic way, you know [laughs]—a way of the noisy—noisiness of the outside [laughs] [loud traffic noises can be heard]. Try to be calm. This is most extremely dualistic way, but in this effort, there is, you know, big hint [?].

So after all those sharp, profound teaching, he [Dōgen] just—he put some words like this:

*However, flowers fall with our attachment, and weeds grows with our detachment.*

He comes back to our actual life [?] without any thinking, and where we should make our effort.

*When we see things and hear things with our whole body and mind, our understanding is not like a mirror with reflections, nor like water under the moon. If we understand one side, the other side is dark.*

[Laughs.] This, you know, three lines is impossible [laughs]. You cannot do anything with those three lines. This is impossible word—statement [laughs], and it takes pretty long time to understand this. "When we see things and hear things with our whole body and mind"—without any idea of enlightenment or like idea of ignorance—when we do something and go beyond ourselves is to be enlightened by it—oh, no, no—"Our understanding is not like a mirror with reflections." You say the moon is a—the reflection is on the water or in the water, but it is not like that. When you watch the beautiful moon on the breaks of water, or waves of water, or calm silent still water, that is the moon. So when you see the moon, in the water that is the moon. When you see the moon in the sky, that is the moon. You don't see the moon on the water. It is impossible to see [laughs] the moon in the water and the moon in the sky at the same time.

So only way [is] to, you know, to appreciate the beauty of the moon in the water or the moon in the sky. But intellectually we say "enlightenment" or "ignorance." It means you are [laughs]—you are very busy [laughs, laughter] watching [?]. What shall I do? If you sit here, you have many [laughs], you know, disturbance in your mind [laughs]. If you are at home, you want to sit [laughs]. When you sit, you have—your mind is there. When you are there, your mind is here. And you are going back and forth [laughing, laughter]—or moon! Beautiful moon. Very busy moon.

So he says it is not like [laughs]—it is not like a mirror with reflection, nor like water under the moon. If we understand one side—sky or the water—or some images on the mirror, or some object, you cannot see both side at once. If we understand one side, the other side is dark. That is two. But usually you want to see the one side only [laughs], having some idea or some [laughs]—some desire for the other side. So you cannot accept what you are doing. You are always, you know, have something—something else in your mind [laughs]. You see some—one side, but the perfect way is just to watch one side. That is enough. This is pretty strict, you know. Before you understand that, you will say this is perfectly—perfect teaching. It will take time



because you will have some—something else, you know, something opposite in your mind always—always.

So Zen is something more than just practice. Actually, Zen is something more than just cross-legged position. But if you understand something more, you have to, you know, practice in—practice it in cross-legged position. There is no other way. One side is enough.

You may say, just to sit on your black cushion will not do anything for you. You cannot solve the problems of our life by just sitting. You may say so [laughs]. You may say so, but it means you are trying to watch both side—up and down. Pretty busy. In that way, your practice will not work. If you say, "I have to sit. That's all. Period." There is no need for you to think the meaning of zazen, even, if you would just sit. That will work out beautifully. This is our zazen.

So one thing is enough. One practice is enough.

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Source: Original City Center tape. Verbatim transcript by Adam Tinkham and Bill Redican (2/02/02).