

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
Shōsan Ceremony
Thursday, December 7, 1967
Tassajara

Buddha—although Buddha started teaching at Paranasi,¹ but actually when he attained enlightenment under the Buddha—Bodhi tree, he started his teaching for the people now. After sitting for seven days, I want to see and I want to hear your true teaching. Now come and show me your teaching.

Student A: My heart is full of joy. This zendō at Tassajara is like my own home. Sitting in zazen, eating with my fellow monks, trying to follow the way of my *rōshi*. Word by word, moment by moment, feeling by feeling, my delusion and my feeling is expressed in this moment.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yes. "In this moment" is right. Don't live in future or past.

Student A: Thank you very much.

Student B (Dan Welch): Dōchō-rōshi, as the sun enlightens our daily life, as the stars never cease to shine, how is it possible to forget?

Suzuki-rōshi: To—excuse me?

Student B: Forget.

Suzuki-rōshi: To forget it. Originally you do not forget it.

Student B: Thank you very much.

Student C: Dōchō-rōshi, outside I see the trees, and the things that grow, and the rocks seem to do perfect zazen. And I see my own potentiality for this, yet still I feel great fear. Please tell me what is the true nature of fear?

Suzuki-rōshi: Fear has no reason why it arise. So when the rocks and running water become a part of you, when you become truly their friend, there will be no fear.

Student C: Thank you very much.

Student D: Dōchō-rōshi, the fish is in the water. The water is in the

¹ From a meal chant: "Buddha was born at Kapilavastu, enlightened at Magadha, taught at Paranasi, entered nirvāna at Kusinārā."

fish. It is soundless, and you cannot hear it. It is clear, and you cannot see it. It has no smell. How can there possibly be a mistake?

Suzuki-rōshi: There is no mistake whatsoever.

Student D: Thank you very much.

Student E: Dōchō-rōshi, I have two questions. Where is home? What is true strength?

Suzuki-rōshi: When you start wondering about there is no home, there is no strength. But if you find your home in this moment at this place, you have enough strength to practice our way. And home is right here.

Student E: Thank you very much.

Student F: Dōchō-rōshi, in our practice should we try to overcome our weakness or should we try to work through it?

Suzuki-rōshi: Why you should overcome? You should try to overcome when there is no big mind or no small mind.

Student F: Thank you very much.

Student G: Dōchō-rōshi, what place is this?

Suzuki-rōshi: What place is this?

Student G: Yes.

Suzuki-rōshi: This is Tassajara zendō.

Student G: Thank you very much.

Student H: Dōchō-rōshi, after four months' training and seven-day *sesshin*, what am I doing here?

Suzuki-rōshi: You are doing nothing.

Student H: Thank you very much.

Student I: Dōchō-rōshi, I'm afraid to ask you a question. Why?

Suzuki-rōshi: Because you see me as your teacher always.

Student I: Thank you very much.

Suzuki-rōshi: Open your eyes and listen to me more.

Student J: Dōchō-rōshi, how is it possible to lose the fear of no nose, no mouth, no eyes, no world of eyes?

Suzuki-rōshi: Fear comes from your ego. So the way is to open up your mind so that there is no more ego.

Student J: Thank you very much.

Student K: Dōchō-rōshi, is there only one act of devotion?

Suzuki-rōshi: Excuse me? There is only—I couldn't follow you.

Student K: Is there only one act of devotion?

Suzuki-rōshi: After devotion, devotion itself only one. And devotional life will be continued one after another incessantly.

Student K: Thank you very much.

Student L: Dōchō-rōshi, when we are silent, what is the question?

Suzuki-rōshi: There is no question when you are silent, but when you are in activity, you will have innumerable questions. But questions should be answered on each moment—in each moment.

Student L: Thank you very much.

Student M: Dōchō-rōshi, how can I stop to ask a question?

Suzuki-rōshi: Originally there is no need to ask a question. Your active mind bring about many questions. So the point is to practice our pure way. Then at least at that time you have no question.

Student M: Thank you very much.

Student N: Dōchō-rōshi, why did you and why did all the buddhas and patriarchs joy [join?] to teach and save others?

Suzuki-rōshi: Try to teach what?

Student N: Why did they teach and try to save others?

Suzuki-rōshi: Save others. Because all of them are part of them [?].

Student N: Thank you very much.

Student O: Dōchō-rōshi, as I accept you as my teacher more and more,

I find more and more a growing dependency on you in that role, and I'm afraid of this. What can I do about it?

Suzuki-rōshi: There is no need to be afraid of being a part of me. Don't be afraid of me, and try to study hard.

Student O: But what happens if something happens to you, and you can't be our teacher any more?

Suzuki-rōshi: That cannot be happen. I am always with you forever.

Student O: Thank you very much.

Student P: Dōchō-rōshi, how or why has this come about that we can feel that we have lost our home and make the journey—what we think is a journey to return to it? How—why—why is this?

Suzuki-rōshi: That's—your feeling is opposite. You think you started your journey from home, but real home is here. Don't [go] wandering about to various countries.

Student P: I understand that, but I wonder why it is that we do that?

Suzuki-rōshi: Because you started your—you feel you started your journey from your home, which is not true home. It was not true home.

Student P: Thank you very much.

Suzuki-rōshi: You must feel as if you came back to your home right now.

Student Q: Dōchō-rōshi, what is the fundamental cause of the universe?

Suzuki-rōshi: Cause of youness [?]?

Student Q: Universe.

Suzuki-rōshi: Hmm?

Student Q: Universe.

Suzuki-rōshi: Universe. Ah, we do not discuss about it because there is no beginning or no end for the universe.

Student Q: Thank you very much.

Student R: No beginning, no end. No teacher, no student. No and yes.

Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, no, yes, yes, no, no, yes, yes, yes, no.

Suzuki-rōshi: That's right.

Student R: Thank you very much.

Suzuki-rōshi: Don't forget you said "yes." Do not forget that you said "yes" with "no."

Student R: Thank you very much.

Student S: Dōchō-rōshi, what is it that the great sages have said speaks when you are silent, yet is silent when you speak?

Suzuki-rōshi: Great sages always, incessantly [are] giving teaching, not only through his mouth, but also by his blinks of eyes, walking, sitting, lying down. Always he is showing the truth.

Student S: Thank you very much.

Student T: Dōchō-rōshi: Rōshi, when a person has saved himself or herself, has that person also saved the world?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yes. Whole universe will be saved. If it is not so, he did not save himself or save others.

Student T: Thank you very much.

Student U: Dōchō-rōshi, we can succeed in directing our effort inside. How can there be anything outside our effort?

Suzuki-rōshi: There is no inside or outside. We say our effort should be directed towards inside, but why we say is to suggest to you the direction. One arrow will get through past, present, and future: the three world. And the arrow will continuously go forward. Don't think the arrow is always going outward. To outward—to go outward, one thousand miles means to come back—to going back one thousand miles. So don't think there is outside or inside in our practice.

Student U: Thank you very much.

Student V: Dōchō-rōshi, should we think or ponder about [1-2 words] our problems or anything?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yes you should. But if you want to think in its true sense, you should resume the area where you do not think. That is pure practice.

Student V: Thank you very much.

Suzuki-rōshi: Your thinking should not be based on unreal foundation.

Student W: Dōchō-rōshi, is it necessary—words, questions, or even thinking?

Suzuki-rōshi: For you it may not be necessary. Continue your practice.

Student W: Thank you very much.

[Long pause.]

Suzuki-rōshi: I know what you mean. Go and rest. Go and rest.

Student X (Ed Brown): Dōchō-rōshi, I have many questions. But they seem to come and go, and they don't seem very important. And everyone seems to have worked very hard during *sesshin*.

Suzuki-rōshi: The question is not—should not be about whether it is right or wrong. Right now, the most important thing is to find what is the most important thing. Still, your question is directed to wrong direction. You are asking yourself for others, which is not important. The most important thing is to find—to be involved in what you do—what you are doing now, without thinking "good" or "bad." Stop asking—stop thinking, and devote yourself to your kitchen work. Whatever people say, or whatever you yourself say, you should not be concerned about it.

Student X: Thank you very much.

Student Y: Dōchō-rōshi, you have told me at first I must serve in calmness.

Suzuki-rōshi: Serve?

Student Y: Serve in calmness others.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student Y: Is the boss that is illumined by the mind['s] calmness only a small boss?

Suzuki-rōshi: There is actually no small or big boss. When you call any boss, that is your boss. Because you think this is big boss or great boss, your practice is not any more true practice. Don't be involved in good or bad, high or low. Just do what you should do at that moment.

Student Y: Thank you very much.

Student Z: Dōchō-rōshi, automobile go to San Francisco, jet plane to New York, rockets to the moon. Where does instant mind go when it's not here?

Suzuki-rōshi: Instant?

Student Z: Instant mind.

Suzuki-rōshi: Inst- [partial word]—?

Student Z: Where does the mind go—

Suzuki-rōshi: When?

Student Z: —when it's not here?

Suzuki-rōshi: Mind does not go or come back. Mind is always here.

Student Z: Thank you very much.

Suzuki-rōshi: The mind which [goes] wandering about is not true mind.

Student AA: Dōchō-rōshi, there is no question that is not answered before it is asked. Have I spoken truly?

Suzuki-rōshi: Excuse me, I couldn't follow you.

Student AA: There is no question that is not answered—

Suzuki-rōshi: That is not answered.

Student AA: —before it is asked.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm. Every questions is answered when you ask question already.

Student AA: Thank you very much.

Student BB: Dōchō-rōshi, to do it all in the present moment, and to be totally involved in the present moment, and yet it seems so impossible with so much feeling and so many thoughts. It seems so impossible.

Suzuki-rōshi: Too many thoughts is all right. That is not the point. The point is to be concerned about too many thought or no thought. All thought—all the thought you have is one thought or no thought. I am not saying to stop your activity. I am not counting how many thought you have. All the thought you have is originally one thought. If it is one

thought, that is no thought.

Student BB: Thank you very much.

Suzuki-rōshi: So don't be concerned about the thought you have. Don't be bothered by it. You should think. To think is all right, but to be bothered by it or to discriminate good thought or bad thought is bad.

Student BB: Thank you very much.

Student CC: Dōchō-rōshi, snow is piled deep in the mountain pass making it nearly impenetrable. How do we pass from here?

Suzuki-rōshi: If you want to pass, you can. There is no difficulty in passing through. Is there any difficulty? I don't think so.

Student CC: Thank you very much.

Student DD: Dōchō-rōshi, thank you for coming to the United States. Thank you for bringing us your teaching. And thank you for showing me this new life and our way. Thank you very much.

Suzuki-rōshi: Thank you.

Student EE: Dōchō-rōshi, what now?

Suzuki-rōshi: Now. Don't ask me. Now is now. You have now. I have my own now. That is why now is so important. It is beyond question and answer.

Student EE: Thank you very much.

Student FF: Dōchō-rōshi, who are the *sangha*?

Suzuki-rōshi: We are. Those who are in Tassajara is *sangha*—in limited sense. But all of us—all sentient being are *sangha*.

Student FF: Thank you very much.

Student GG: Dōchō-rōshi, if everything changes, why is there always suffering?

Suzuki-rōshi: Because—because of change. Change itself is suffering. If change is essential nature for everything, suffering cannot be avoid. There is—because there is no way to avoid from it. If you know there is no other—no way to avoid from it, there is our relief.

Student HH: Dōchō-rōshi, neither mind nor Buddha, what is this?

Suzuki-rōshi: Excuse me?

Student HH: Neither mind nor Buddha. What is this?

Suzuki-rōshi: Neither mind nor Buddha, did you say?

Student HH: Right.

Suzuki-rōshi: Neither mind nor Buddha points out the real Buddha because we are caught by the word of Buddha. If we say "Buddha," we want to find out where is Buddha, when Buddha is right here. So "neither mind nor Buddha," we say.

Student HH: Thank you very much.

Student II: Dōchō-rōshi, who observes our way?

Suzuki-rōshi: You observe our way—when you observe our way everything observe our way. So our way is universal way, and at the sa-[partial word]—at the same time your own way.

Student II: Thank you very much.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yakusan-zenji—Yakusan-zenji did not give lecture for a long time.² The monks asked him to give them lecture. Yakusan-zenji mounted on—on the altar, and seeing every monk one by one, and came down from the altar, and went back to his own room again. A monk asked—a monk who was responsible for the zendō asked him why did he —didn't he give any lecture? Yakusan said, there is a master—there is scripture master or Buddhist philosophy master, and I am master of Zen. Don't wonder who I am, he said.

Zen monks are Zen monks because they are speaking in fluently without saying anything—just by everyday activity. That is how Zen student should be. That is why I said Buddha started giving teaching when he attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree in the country of Magadha.³ We should not forget this point.

And we should take care of our practice, not only zazen practice but only —whatever we do in Tassajara. I am very grateful for you to observe our way in various way without asking why we do that or why we should do this. Whatever you do, that is our practice. There you will find out yourself. Our practice is valuable because we can find out ourselves on

² Yaoshan Weiyān (Jap. Yakusan Igen): 751-834. Disciple of Sekitō Kisen. Master of Ugan, Senu, and Dōgo. This story is Case 7 of the *Ts'ung-jung lu* (Jap. *Shoyoroku, Book of Serenity*) collection of kōans. See also SR-68-10-12-A, SR-69-06-00, and SR-71-08-08.

³ One of the newly formed and powerful monarchies on the Ganges Plain at the time of Shākyamuni Buddha.

what you do in that moment.

Thank you very much.

Source: City Center original tape. Verbatim transcript by Adam Tinkham and Bill Redican (4/5/01).