

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
Thursday Evening, January 11, 1968
Tassajara

I already explained about Maitreya Buddha when I explained about the three period—three period of Buddhism. And in this occasion, I want to explain this—all of the Ten Buddhas which we recite [at] mealtime:

Homage to the pure Dharmakāya Vairochana Buddha.

I already explained Vairochana Buddha.

*And to the complete Sambhogakāya Vairochana Buddha.
To the numerous Nirmānakāya Shākyamuni Buddha.
To the future Maitreya Buddha.*

I explained already Maitreya Buddha.

*To all buddhas, past, present and future all over the world.
To the Mahāyāna Saddharmapundarīka-sūtra.
To the great Mañjushrī Bodhisattva.
To the Mahāyāna Samantabhadra Bodhisattva.
To the great compassionate Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva.
To the many bodhisattvas, mahāsattvas.
To the Mahāprajñāpāramitā.*

Here we have complete teaching of Buddha. Dharmakāya Buddha, Sambhogakāya Buddha, Nirmānakāya Buddha. This is Buddha. And here we have Mahāyāna bodhisattvas. And we have also the Mahāyāna *Mahāprajñāpāramitā*. This is the teaching. So we have here Buddha and sangha and dharma. So to recite those names actually—if you recite those names with deeper understanding, it means you are repeating, you are practicing the Buddha's way.

And Buddha—we have three ways of—meaning of Buddha, or understanding of Buddha: Dharmakāya Buddha, Sambhogakāya Buddha, and Nirmānakāya Buddha. Buddha as a truth—as the truth is Dharmakāya Buddha. The Buddha as rewarded body is Sambhogakāya Buddha. And Buddha which takes various form to help people is Nirmānakāya Buddha.

When Shākyamuni Buddha help people, providing various teaching, like a doctor who make prescription for the invalid, is Nirmānakāya Buddha, "incarnated body," we say. Sambhogakāya Buddha is the Buddha—rewarded body or attained the buddhahood which was attained through his practice, is Sambhogakāya Buddha. Dharmakāya

Buddha, as I said, Buddha as a truth. So historical Buddha is actually Nirmānakāya Buddha.

And Buddha who express—who realized the truth is Dharmakāya Buddha, Buddha as the truth. Whether he attained enlightenment or not, Buddha will be there. Truth is there. So, in this sense, although he realized the truth, but he—although he realize the truth, if we put emphasis on the truth itself, rather than its body or rather than its spiritual or physical being, that is Dharmakāya Buddha. Although he has—he is the embodiment of the truth, without practice he cannot attain enlightenment or he cannot express the truth. Only when he actually practice the truth, the truth will be realized—realization of the truth will take place in this sense. We called him Sambhogakāya Buddha.

So Nirmānakāya Buddha, or Sambhogakāya Buddha, or Dharmakāya Buddha, actually one. In this way we understand Buddha. And here, instead of Buddha himself, the name of Vairochana Buddha is here.

*To—homage to the pure Dharmakāya, Vairochana Buddha.
To the complete Sambhogakāya, Vairochana Buddha.*

Vairochana Buddha sometime may be Dharmakāya, but sometime he is also Sambhogakāya because he is the bodhisattva. Before he become Vairochana Buddha, he was a bodhisattva and practiced his way according to his vow.

To the numerous Nirmānakāya, Shākyamuni Buddha.

We say:

All the buddhas, past and future—past, present, and future.

When they realize—when they become buddha, they become Shākyamuni Buddha. So Shākyamuni Buddha will be numerous. So it is not only Shākyamuni Buddha that—who attained enlightenment. All the patriarchs and bodhisattvas will be the Buddha—Shākyamuni Buddha.

To the future Maitreya Buddha.

I explained Maitreya Buddha already.

To all buddhas past, present, and future all over the world.

Here "world," this "world" is not just this human world. There are many worlds. So this "world" means worlds—various worlds in which there are various worlds.

To the Mahāyāna Saddharmapundarīka-sūtra.

This is—this sūtra is supposed to be—to—supposed to have highest teaching of Buddha as well as *Avatamsaka-sūtra*.

To the great Mañjushrī Bodhisattva.

Mañjushrī Bodhisattva—I explained the great Mañjushrī Bodhisattva when I explained *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*.

To the Mahāyāna Samantabhadra Bodhisattva.

The Mahāyāna Samantabhadra Bodhisattva is the bodhisattva who is famous for his ten vows. Samantabhadra Bodhisattva. Samantabhadra. *Samanta* means universal. *Bhadra* means wisdom or sagacity or deep wisdom [?]. Here when we say *Samanta* and *bhadra* looks like near the same, but there is great difference.

Usually through intellectual understanding, you will—you may have the universal truth, you know. You may understand what is universal truth inducing—by induction or by experience or by thinking. But wisdom which we mean cannot be acquired through thinking or by experience.

In your philosophy there were various dispute whether it is possible to have perfect wisdom by experience. Through experience you will have some knowledge or deep perfect understanding, or that is—or someone may say it is not possible to acquire the perfect understanding by experience. So even experience—it is—we are—we cannot be sure to have perfect understanding. In—according to Buddhism, it is not possible to have the perfect understanding through experience. The accumulation of experience—even though you repeat same experience over and over, that result of experience is still experience, and that is not—that cannot be the perfect truth.

We—that which you will attain through experience will be some universality. But some accurate, substantial, solid, tangible feeling, or meaning cannot be attained by experience. So we put emphasis on validity rather than universality. This validity could be acquired through right meditation. If you, you know—if zazen practice is just to acquire or to attain some special experience, that is not true zazen. True zazen that you have acquired or obtained by—through right practice is not—is more than just experience. You may say this—what you acquire by right meditation is something—the power, you may say power of adjusting yourself according to the circumstances. Sometime we put emphasis on flexibility. You know, you should be always ready to respond to the circumstances. So when you have perfect ability to

respond to the circumstances is the purpose of—is what you will have through right meditation. Even though you do not realize, you do not think, or you do not aware of your—the merit of your zazen, it does not mean you haven't acquired anything. Even though you think you have—you have had some special experience, but that does not mean you acquired the true power of meditation. That is why we say "think non-thinking." So you may say—obtain something which you cannot obtain, or you know, whatever. Anyway, what you will have through zazen is more than what you think you have acquired. This kind of acquisition cannot be attained by experience or thinking.

That is why this bodhisattva has—Samantabhadra Bodhisattva—this bodhisattva is called Samantabhadra. *Samanta* is "universal, universality." And *bhadra* means "wisdom" or "validity"—more solid and concrete idea. Anyway, his name is Samantabhadra, universal and—universality and sagacity. So this bodhisattva is bodhisattva of all the dharma, all the universal teaching, all the dharma. As bodhisattva, Avalokiteshvara is the bodhisattva of compassion. This bodhisattva is the bodhisattva of wisdom or truth. But this truth here —by "truth" I do not mean some truth in ordinal [ordinary] sense. It is more than truth. It is more concrete. It is more tangible.

And here—and there is—again there is two meaning in *samanta*. One is universal buddha as a Dharmakāya Buddha, and the other is the universal buddha as a Nirmānakāya Buddha, you see? He is—he is Dharmakāya Buddha, but on the other hand he is Nirmānakāya Buddha. He is also Nirmānakāya Buddha. Nirmānakāya Buddha is more concrete, not abstract. Dharmakāya Buddha is more abstract buddha, buddha as a truth. Buddha before he takes various form is Dharmakāya Buddha. But Nirmānakāya Buddha is—may be various being which has form and color. So this bodhisattva has two side: He is universal buddha as a Dharmakāya Buddha, and also Nirmānakāya Buddha as a more concrete buddha which has form and color.

As a Dharmakāya Buddha, his body is omnipresent or—truth itself as a Dharmakāya—as a Nirmānakāya Buddha, his body is more real, tangible buddha. So each one of us will be Nirmānakāya Buddha. But if you think in this way, it is not only this bodhisattva who is Dharmakāya and Nirmānakāya. All of us is also Nirmānakāya Buddha and Dharmakāya Buddha.

So if you practice, or if you realize who is this bodhisattva, you will realize who you are. This is the characteristic of Mahāyāna buddha or bodhisattva. So to repeat, to—and every bodhisattva has their own—his own vow. And if—his vow may not be just his special vow but our —may be the vow we should take.

This bodhisattva has ten vows—ten vows. And I want to explain one

by one. But before I explain it I want to explain, or I want to make it clear what is true wisdom. I think I already explained about what is true wisdom once or twice. But it—as it is rather difficult to explain it, so I don't know whether you understood it or not, partly because [laughs] it is rather hard for me to explain it.

Did I expl- [partial word]—do you remember the classifications of our way of observing things? To observe things from the viewpoint of existence—viewpoint of existence, and viewpoint of nonexistence, and viewpoint of superior existence—superior viewpoint. Viewpoint of existence is usual, you know, way of observing things, usual understanding of is one of nature. And almost all the people are involved in this viewpoint. The viewpoint—from this point, your question will be, "What is it?" And when you have true under- [partial word]—better understanding, or the second understanding, your question will be, "How things goes?"

Even people who is not satisfied with materialistic way of life, as long as their view of life is based on some substantial viewpoint of existence, they cannot get out of materialistic way of life. Even though they seek for some spiritual life, in their spiritual life there is various materialistic values [?] or [1 word]. And evil and spirits there may be because their understanding is just bound by some idea of existence or substance which cannot—which exist actually. When nothing concrete exist, nothing permanent exist.

Some people believe in some evil spirits, you know [laughs], which works in the same way on you, you know. But no evil spirit can work in the same way forever. They are changing. Whatever exist—whatever the existence may be, they are changing. There is nothing that does not change. If so, there is no evil—special evil spirits who work in the same way. To believe in some permanent one deity, you know, is also based on the idea of existence. So we cannot take this aspect. Even though you say "spiritual life," but that is not spiritual life. It is another form of material life.

Then, if everything is changing, nothing exist, nothing special exist. This is true, but in the smallest particle of time, everything exist. Although everything is changing, but, you know, moment after moment it will change. But everything—at that moment, smallest particle of time exist in that form or color with close, close relationship with some other things. That is true.

So the third aspect or superior aspect include two aspects of existent and non-existent, or the first and the second. But even though you understand this truth, it does not mean you have the third aspect. Actually, to attain—to have, to obtain the third aspect there is no other way to practice our way, or else you cannot obtain this aspect.

Whatever you say, however, that is—as long as your aspect is in realm of thinking, that is not real[ly] the third aspect.

So if you study our way intellectually, you should arrange the various teaching in some order, or you have to find out some system of the teaching. But when it is necessary to—for you to accept teaching, one by one, as long as you rely on intellectual understanding, you should compare one teaching to the other. But our way of understanding of teaching is quite different.

In Rinzai school, if you, you know, pass one kōan, it is good enough. You should pass kōan, one by one, without comparing one kōan to the other. Of course, in Rinzai there are some teachers who arrange kōans, you know. We call it "stepladder practice"—stepladder, one by one [laughs].

But in Tendai school, they say that is—to arrange teaching vertically, to compare teaching to the other teaching is to arrange teaching. But level? What—what do you say?

Student: Horizontal.

Suzuki-rōshi: Horizontal way, yeah.

So we should not arrange teaching horizontal or vertical. We should, you know, realize the meaning of the teaching, one by one, without arranging. So this is not only Zen way but also Tendai's way. So-called-it, middle way in Tendai is a way to accept teaching one by one without arranging it. That is the middle way. That is the understanding—that is the third understanding which you will acquire by the third aspect, or wisdom, perfect wisdom. That is the middle way.

So when we practice our way, we give up the one, the first aspect which is aspect of existence, and aspect of nonexistence, or the second aspect. We give up all those aspects and practice our way, resuming in a fundamental life act [?] or life force which is not intellectual or emotional.

You may understand why we practice our way in so-called-it *shikantaza*. We do not say *shikantaza* [2-4 words]. But some people say *shikantaza*. In *Shōbōgenzō* there are many words. [Unclear phrase in Japanese: *shikan* plus 2-3 words] like the *shikantaza*. But it means—we say "just to sit," but "just to sit" does not—means not—don't depend on intellectual understanding. But use the intellectual understanding. This is our way.

So you may understand true—our Buddhist traditional way of practice

or understanding. So whatever books, texts you read there is Zen. So all those scriptures is the truth of Zen by which you will understand what is Zen. If you have eyes to read it, you know, this is not just scripture, just Buddhist scripture. This is Zen text which you should read. But there is no need to read all of those scriptures because there is no need to arrange it vertically or horizontally. So if you open some part of the scripture, there is Zen. In this way, we should understand our way, and we should read scriptures. When you can read scriptures you can find out, you can enjoy your life whatever you do. To read scripture is nothing but to appreciate, to enjoy, or—. That is why we recite ten names of Buddha when we have meals.

Each buddha, you know, is Mañjushrī Bodhisattva who is taking care of our practice. Even the name of—even he has many names, he is the buddha who is taking care of our practice.

Next time I want to explain the ten vows—ten vows of Fugen—Fugen-bosatsu or Samantabhadra Bodhisattva.

Do you have question? Some question? *Hai*.

Student A: I don't quite understand the Samantabhadra Bodhisattva.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student A: What do you mean by—that it's a realized [1 word] bodhisattva? I just don't understand.

Suzuki-rōshi: Samanta?

Student A: Pardon me. Sambhogakāya.

Suzuki-rōshi: Hmm?

Student A: Sambhogakāya.

Suzuki-rōshi: Oh, Sambhogakāya.

Student A: Pardon me. The Sambhogakāya.

Suzuki-rōshi: Oh. Sambhogakāya is—we say, you know, without practice there is no buddha, you know. It means practice is buddha. When you practice there is buddha. But if you do not have real understanding of practice or everyday life, you know, you—your understanding is not based on the real understanding. So that is—that understanding is not true understanding of ourselves, or each being, or everyday activity. That you have true understanding of practice means that you have the meaning of—true meaning of everyday life.

You may say, "Even though I don't understand," you know, "true meaning of life, I am buddha." In this—if—when you say so, your understanding is based on, you know, some substantial understanding some buddha—buddha, you know—something buddha, some special thing, you know. But buddha is, you know, is not some substantial being. "Whether or not I understand him, there is buddha," you may say. Or, "I am buddha. Even though I don't practice zazen I am buddha. So there may not be no need to practice zazen." But when you say so, your understanding is quite different from our understanding, which is practice and buddha is one [?], or enlightenment is one [?], or whatever we do, that is buddha.

So Sambhogakāya Buddha, which is rewarded body, which is one with everyday life, which is nothing but each being, means to, you know, to realize the buddha through—or you may say to express your idea of buddha through your way of practice or your everyday life. That is Sambhogakāya—idea of Sambhogakāya.

[Laughs.] Do you understand? Not quite [laughs].

"Rewarded body," we say, but it is not like accumulation of our practice. We—as a rewarded stage, you will attain enlightenment. But rewarded body is—when there is something, there is already buddha. That is Sambhogakāya.

For ordinal [ordinary] people, of course, you know, because of many *kalpas* of time, you know—because of Buddha's many *kalpas* of practice he attained buddhahood in this way, scripture says. But that is just more dramatic, you know, or poetic expression. "Many *kalpas* of time—after he practice many *kalpas* of time, he attained buddhahood," or—. But actually the rewarded body is—means oneness of practice and buddhahood. Oneness of your everyday life and buddhahood. That is Sambhogakāya. [Laughs.]

May be, yeah—may be difficult to accept it, especially when I say your everyday life [laughs]—oneness of enlightenment and your everyday life. That may be difficult to accept it, but it is so. Because it is difficult to accept it, you sit, you know. Even while [1 word] you sit without thinking about this kind of, you know—not make any sense, you know. You can say—so if you want to understand it, just sit [laughs] without asking question. In your sitting, you should not sit for anything [?]. Just sit. When your find—when you find yourself in zazen, you will have various ability [?] you can [3-5 words] without any problem.

You have some question?

Student B: When you say Mañjushrī Bodhisattva takes care of our

practice, does that include prayer, then?

Suzuki-rōshi: Hmm?

Student B: When you say that Mañjushrī takes care of our practice should we pray to him [1-2 words]?

Suzuki-rōshi: Mañjushrī.

Student B: Mañjushrī Bodhisattva. Am I pronouncing it wrong?

Suzuki-rōshi: [Laughs.] Again, that is your understanding—based on the substantial understanding, you know. Forget all about any substantial idea. This is—I—I—I realize this point is very, very important for, you know, for people. When doctor come, I was listening to him lecture. And I was very much interested in his [1-2 words]. He is rejecting substantial, you know, understanding from beginning to end. And this is the, you know—this is why, you know, we cannot understand Buddhism or our way.

Actually there is nothing, you know [laughs], including you. If so, we should just sit. Then you will be, you know—you will be the one including everything. Because, you know, you do not get accustomed to this kind of—to live in this form you are not accustomed to it, your own home. So you are, you know, seeking for, you are wandering [wondering?] about finding your home. "Where is my home?" You are right—right in your home, and you are seeking for a home with substantial idea. The ...

[End of tape. A fragment of a lecture was found at the start of the master tape for SR-68-01-11-B, which seems almost certainly to be the end of this lecture. The fragment follows below.]

... without expecting anything. Just you can enjoy things outside of your home. Sometime you can—if it is something good, you can take—take it to your home [laughs]. But home is the most important [laughs] thing, not something which you—you have brought. That is zazen. *[Chant follows.]*

Source: City Center original tape. Verbatim transcript by Diana Bartle and Bill Redican (3/20/01).