

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
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Tassajara

We are still studying about Samantabhadra Buddha. This buddha is told in *Saddharma*—in *Kegon Sūtra*.¹ In *Kegon*—*Kegon Sūtra* is famous for its view of dharma. In *Kegon Sūtra*—the main thought of *Kegon Sūtra* is perfect harmony with truth and various fact or things, and perfect harmony between every existing—every existence.

Jiji muge or *riji muge*.² Most people knows this special technical term. *Jiji muge* and *riji muge*. *Riji muge*—*ri* is truth or theory, and *ji* is things. Where you—where there is something, there is truth or theory. So through things you will understand the theory on which everything are based on. This much is understood [by] almost everyone, but perfect harmony between each things—this is rather hard to understand or rather hard to accept unless you study Buddhist thought more.

We say—we have—as I said last night,³ our thought or our view of things is very substantial. And we think everything exist as it is and everything is independent from the rest of the things, but actually everything exist—everything is dependent with each other. Things are dependent with each other, and things are changing always. That things changes means it is not independent being. So there is—there should not be—there must be—originally things does not exist having some special self-nature. Strictly speaking, everything does not exist, but in the smallest particle of time things exist. Or as a smallest particle of element things exist.⁴

So in *Kegon Sūtra* they divide things—they divide time and space in smallest particle. So in *Kegon Sūtra*, when we—when we ex- [partial word]—when they explain this dharma world they use cosmic scale of explanation. So that is why the description is so great. I think I already read it. I read some of the description:

With deepest belief and understanding, through pure physical and

¹ *Kegon Sūtra: Buddhāvataṃsaka-sūtra* (Sanskrit) or *Kegon-kyō* (Jap.). The fundamental sūtra for the Chinese Huayen school and Japanese Kegon School of Buddhism.

² Suzuki-rōshi discusses *ri* and *ji* extensively in the *Sandōkai* lectures: "When you practice zazen more, you can accept things as your own, whatever it is, you know. That is actually the teaching of, you know, famous teaching of *Kegon*—*jiji-muge*. *Jiji-muge* means 'being has no,' you know, 'no barrier, no disturbance.' It —it, you know—interrelated closely. And it is difficult to say, 'This is bird, and this is me,' because it is interrelated very closely. So it is difficult to separate bluejay from me. That is *jiji-muge*." [From fourth *Sandōkai* lecture, SR-70-06-03, p. 3.]

³ Lecture SR-68-01-11.

⁴ *gokumi*: See Lecture SR-70-06-13.

mental action, to bow to the number of ultimate elements, to bow to the number of ultimate elements of all the buddhas-land in ten direction of the three worlds.

We don't know how many, you know, buddha here we have to bow to. It means that when we realize that in the smallest element there [are] innumerable elements. So each element consists of the innumerable elements. So we don't know what is the ultimate existent—existence.

When we reach this understanding—when we have this understanding, we have no more idea of self. Instead of having idea of self, we will see the Buddha in each world. So this world, if you say is great—this world is as great as cosmos. If you say this world is small, you will see the innumerable world in—even in a speck of dust. In this way we have to understand our world, and in this way we have to practice our way. So accordingly, this bodhisattva's practice is always based on this understanding.

To respect *tathāgata*, this is the [vow] Number 1.

With the deepest belief and understanding, through pure physical and mental action, to bow to the number of ultimate elements of all the buddha-lands in ten directions of the three worlds, appearing in each of those world as innumerable bodies, as many as the number of ultimate elements of all the wondrous, incomprehensible buddhas, and bowing to them [1 word: sounds like *casana*] by [same word], and to continue this practice perpetually.

This is the first vow. So actually it means to continue this practice incessantly, and for us everything is Buddha. Large and small, everything is Buddha. So to respect Buddha means to respect everything.

And the second one—admiration of the *tathāgatas*.

With deepest understanding, actually seeing innumerable of ultimate elements of all the buddha-lands in inexhaustible—

Excuse me.

With the deepest understanding, actually seeing the number of ultimate elements of all the buddha-lands in ten directions of the three worlds, making inexhaustible sound of sea from his tongue and from each of the innumerable sound making out world of the sea, to admire the sea of virtue and merits of all the *tathāgatas* and to continue practice forever.

This is the second vow of the Samantabhadra Bodhisattva. This is also the practice, to treat everything as you treat your teacher or Buddha. As

Dōgen-zenji says, "You should not call rice—rice *kome*,"⁵ you know. "You should call it *okome*." *Okome* is more, you know, honorary prefix. *Okome*. Instead of saying *mizu*, "water," [say] *omizu*. It means—*o* means honorary prefix. Or, "You should treat a grain of rice as you treat your eyes." This kind of practice comes from this idea.

So instead of respecting—instead of respecting things objectively, here we have—we respect—here we respect our practice instead. It looks like we put emphasis on to respect something, some particular thing. But actually, we respect the practice—practice of respecting thing.

Usually, you know, you—when you bow to Buddha you look like you are respecting Buddha, but actually why you bow to Buddha is to continue your practice. That is the point. Without having any particular idea of—any particular substantial idea or materialistic idea, just to live in bodhisattva's vow is the point.

So we practice our way to solemnize this dharma world. So without practice things doesn't mean anything. Because of our practice, things come to have some meaning. So without practice there is nothing. But when you have materialistic understanding of things, even though you do not practice in our way, things exist. But if you understand how things [are] going completely, you should continue your practice as things are going. This is the point of practice.

And the third one is about *kuyō*⁶ in Japanese—to provide things for Buddha or sangha or dharma. In Sanskrit we say *pūjanā—pūjanā*.⁷ You know, in—Vedānta was in the five—I don't know when they practice *pūjanā*, you know. It means to make offering or to recite sūtra. Actually we offer incense. That is *kuyō*. To offer flower, that is also *kuyō*. And originally, we count four *kuyō*. One is, you know, to prepare food for the Buddha. And to prepare something to wear. And to prepare something to sleep in. And to prepare Buddha for—for Buddha something to—some medicine. Those are four *kuyō*. But later we count many and many ways of making offering or *kuyō*. This is also our practice.

And in *Kegon Sūtra* why we make those offerings is described in detail. Why we—we do not use *zūkō*.⁸ *Zūkō* is, you know, very fine powder of incense, you know. And we rub it, you know—we put in our hands like this, you know, when we have special ceremony. Why we do it, or why we burn incense, or why we offer flowers to Buddha? *Zūkō*, which is the fine powder of incense, is to purify our body and everything. And to offer flower means to have compassionate mind. You think as if a beautiful

⁵ *kome* (Jap.): uncooked white rice.

⁶ *kuyō* (Jap.): veneration.

⁷ Or *pūjā*.

⁸ *zūkō* (Jap.): to powder one's whole body with fine incense.

flower open in your mind, and with this flower in your mind you should decorate the buddha-land. That is why we offer the flower to the Buddha. Why we burn incense is to pervade our way all over the place, all over the world. So when you burn incense, if wind come from east, incense will go to the west. According to the wind, the incense will pervade everywhere. That is why we offer incense. And each of the incense will be one merit. And one merit will be burned by wisdom fire and smoke of or smell of liberation will pervade all over the world. In *Kegon Sūtra*, it is described in this way.

And food is to support our immortal practice. When we practice our way, sup- [partial word]—when we support our way by food, we will attain enlightenment. So to offer food, or to take food is to practice our way.

And light, candlelight or whatever light it may be—why we light—offer light is to break the darkness of ignorance. That is why we offer light. This is understanding.

And this is material offering, but there is dharma offering. The dharma offering is very symbolical and idealistic. To read, to recite sūtra, or to build that—to build a shrine. Or to copy—to make copy of scripture, or to build, to make a bell, or to make buddha image, or to give lectures about scriptures, those are dharma offering or dharma *kuyō*, we say.

This is—it is not only—there are many kinds of description. When Buddhism was introduced to Japan—soon after Buddhism was introduced to Japan, we made big, big Vairochana Buddha. Do you know—I think you know the big bronze Buddha in Nara. This is a kind of, you know, *kuyō* in pretty large scale.

As the description of—cosmic description of *Kegon Sūtra*—as it was described, way of making *kuyō* described in *Kegon Sūtra*, they did it very big—they made big—great big Buddha, you know [laughs]. But it does not mean—what—true understanding of *Kegon Sūtra* is not matter of big or small. But their understanding was rather primitive so they [laughs] made a big, big Buddha. With the best effort of the nation, they did it. And since then, Buddhism became more and more elaborate. Their practice more and more became elaborate. And they spent most of the time in their devotional way of practice until no commoner can follow their practice.

So when Kamakura period—when the government lost their power, the Samurai class arouse—arose and take over the influential controlling power. That was the Kamakura period. And various new schools appear at that time. Zen was one of the schools—new Buddhist school.

If you understand this kind of spirit of making offering, as Dōgen-zenji says, offering should be like to offer the flower which blooms in remoted

mountain to the Buddha. It should be like this. In spring, we—in Japan we have cherry blossom, and to offer that cherry blossom to the Buddha is *kuyō*—is offered to make offering.

This evening, you know, you saw big ring [laughs] around the moon, you know. To make offering to Buddha, to make the big ring—with a big ring to make offering to Buddha is *kuyō*. To hear the sound of the river should be *kuyō*, according to Dōgen-zenji. So to have deeper understanding instead of shallow, substantial understanding is to make a perfect offering.

I am very grateful for you to make various offering to the altar. Sometime, you know, wildflower, sometime stone, or candlestick, or is sometimes stone. But this is, you know, true offering I think. And this is the true practice, offering of practice—our practice, which should be continued—continuously practiced. And when we practice our way in this way, there is buddha and we are also buddha. In this way, we should understand this bodhisattva's vows.

Do you have some question? *Hai*.

Student A: Could you explain again why the *Kegon Sūtra* is supposed to have the highest truth?

Suzuki-rōshi: Highest truth? The *Kegon*—yeah. You may say highest truth because the understanding of dharma is very profound. It is said that—I don't think that is true but—it is said that this is the sūtra which Buddha had in his mind when he attained enlightenment. But he didn't know how to explain his lofty—his deep understanding of life. So he started to tell by *Āgama-sūtra*. *Āgama-sūtra* will be—is the first sūtra which was told by him. Anyway, *Kegon Sūtra* is very important sūtra. But *Saddharma-pundarīka-sūtra*, or *Hoke-kyō*,⁹ is also important sūtra. The *Hoke-kyō* is more concrete—more concrete, while *Kegon-kyō* is very abstract.

First of all, when you want to be a Buddhist, you should understand the emptiness—or you should give up substantial viewpoint of life. But you should come back to the substantial explanation of the world. When you say something, you should put it into some word. When you put it in some word, it is already substantial. *Saddharma-pundarīka-sūtra* is more, you know, concrete and more—easier to understand and it is for everyone, while *Kegon Sūtra* is very philosophical.

Student B: What is the English translation of *Kegon*?

Suzuki-rōshi: *Saddharm-* [partial word]—no—*Avatamsaka-sūtra*.

Student C: I don't understand about *Saddharm*—Samantabhadra

⁹ The *Lotus Sūtra*.

Bodhisattva. What was his role in Buddhist history?

Suzuki-rōshi: Buddhist history?

Student C: How does he fit into the *Kegon Sūtra* and into our meal chant?

Suzuki-rōshi: Oh, in *Kegon Sūtra*, you know, most of the description of his teaching is in *Kegon Sūtra*. If you read *Kegon Sūtra*, you will have his name and that which—there is very important teaching is told by Buddha.

Student C: Was he one of Buddha's disciples?

Suzuki-rōshi: I don't know. No one knows, maybe. Some of them, you know, some of the Buddha's disciples were Buddha's disciples, and some of them may not be actually, historically, Buddha's disciples.

Student C: Well then this sūtra was supposed to be thought of by Buddha—

Suzuki-rōshi: Yes.

Student C: —told by Samantabhadra Bodhisattva.

Suzuki-rōshi: Or told by Buddha.

Student C: I don't understand.

Suzuki-rōshi: Told by Buddha about this bodhisattva.

Student C: Oh, I see.

Suzuki-rōshi: *Hai*.

Student D: This is—I'm not sure how to put the question, but last night you said that when we find the true power of zazen—

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student D: —we wouldn't have trouble affecting what we want to affect, or it will just come naturally.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student C: And then at other times you've said that zazen doesn't help us or doesn't change us a bit.

Suzuki-rōshi: [Laughing.] Yeah. Yeah. Doesn't help. [Laughter.]

Zazen doesn't help, you know. But your true nature will help. If you, you know, practice zazen because zazen will help you—with this idea if you practice zazen, it will not help you [laughs] because that is not true zazen.

Student E: Dōcho-rōshi?

Suzuki-rōshi: *Hai.*

Student E: From time to time you emphasize a different recommendation for how we practice or do zazen.

Suzuki-rōshi: [Laughs.] Uh-huh..

Student E: Breathing, watching our breath, or concentrating our power in our *hara*, or last night you referred to *shikantaza*.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student E: When you change your recommendations, do you think that we as a group should change our way of practicing according to what you say in the lecture? Or just those who feel it?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah, that is good question [laughs, laughter]. You know, I— the point is, you know—whatever practice you do, the point is to practice your way without expecting anything, you know. Just to be yourself you practice zazen. So even though you count [breathing]—even though you cannot do it properly, you should not be worried about it. Just do it. That is our way, you know. Even though your posture is not perfect, it is all right as long as you are practicing hard. You should not criticize your practice. Even though I recommend you some particular way, it does not mean if you cannot do that that is not zazen. Even though you can do it almost perfect, you know, it does not mean that is—it is not always true zazen. When you are involved in—when you limit the true meaning of zazen, or when you become critical with your zazen, or when you are proud of your good practice, that is not true zazen. Do you understand?

The way I recommend you is—I do not recommend it as the best way, you know. To put some strength in your *hara* is—means to take natural, deep breathing and to have calm mind. To be concentrated on your breathing or counting of breathing means—does not mean if you are just concentrated on your breathing I don't mind your posture or your mind—your wandering mind. You see? The point I—you concentrated on will be different, but the various instruction should be followed. Do you understand?

Student E: When you say—

Suzuki-rōshi: *Mudrā*, you know. "Don't lose your *mudrā*," you know, means you should be—you should practice our way with whole—with all of your mind and body, in one word.

There are not so many, you know, points—pretty many, but, you know, in one word to keep your [laughs] posture right, and to keep your—when your posture is right your mind is also right.

Some more question?

Student F: Dōgen-zenji said that the mind and body are one—

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student F: —and the way is attained through the body. What did he mean by that?

Suzuki-rōshi: Through? Not "through." To—mind and body is one, so if you practice physical practice, the mind is there, you know. True mind is there.

Student F: Thank you.

Suzuki-rōshi: So what we should do is to sit in right posture.

Student G: Just a small question on posture. What your hands—should your fingers be together?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yes, fingers together. And you should not cross too deep or too shallow. See? Here, you have two joint here. And this joint and this joint will make one line—two lines.

Student G: Your first joint should be with your middle joint, and the middle joint—

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. Yours is right. If your *mudrā* is not right, we correct your *mudrā*. Some more question? Please ask me.

Student H: What are the three worlds?

Suzuki-rōshi: Hmm? Three worlds?

Student H: Yes, that you mentioned tonight.

Suzuki-rōshi: Oh. Past, present, and future.

Student I: And what are the ten directions?

Suzuki-rōshi: [Laughs, laughter.] So in past—in present, you know, there is past and future, although—but we say "three worlds," and myriads of *kalpas* of time or something like that, you know. This is more—we should know, you know, what does it mean actually. The Indian literature is very, you know—scale is very big, and they repeat things—descriptions over and over again. And Buddhist scripture is not exception. But we should know what does it mean actually.

Student I: Are there supposed to be ten directions?

Suzuki-rōshi: Ten—ten directions? Eight directions, and up and down—ten directions [laughs, laughter].

Student I: Like north, south, east, west?

Suzuki-rōshi: And, you know, east and north [northeast], east-south [southeast].

Student I: Okay.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. Eight and up and down. And there are a few this way [laughs, laughter]. So I don't know how many.

Student J: Is our community here different from the original Buddhist community? Or is it the same?

Suzuki-rōshi: I don't know exactly [laughs, laughter]. This is a big subject to study, you know. Anyway, in Buddhist community there were four: layman, and laywoman, and monk, and nun is four. We count four. We have, you know, four kinds of disciples or—in our community we have few or no nun yet [laughs]. But laywoman and layman.

We will have precepts too, you know, more and more. "You should respect the Buddhist or Buddhist thought," and, "You shouldn't trip based on Buddha." This kind of precepts we will have—new precepts [laughs, laughter] created by you. If Buddha says, "Don't do that," that is one precept [laughs]—precepts. After they have household life, they became a Buddhist, you know, at that time. This is the typical [?] thing [?] But there are many young disciples of Buddha. So may be the same.

Source: City Center original tape. Verbatim transcript by Diana Bartle and Bill Redican (11/6/01).