

**Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi**  
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I am glad to see you from here [laughs]. My organ [?]<sup>1</sup> may not be so good yet, but I am—today I'm testing, you know, just testing. [Laughs, laughter.] I don't know if it works or not. Whether it works or not, or if I speak or not, is not such a big problem for us. Whatever happen to us, it is something which it should happen—which should happen. So purpose of our practice [is] to have this kind of complete composure in our everyday life.

Some of Japanese member, you know, thought because I am—I am practicing always zazen, "He not—he will not be catch cold. [Laughs.] He will not suffer from flu. But it was funny for him to stay in bed so long." [Laughs.]

But purpose of zazen is to makes—to make our—to make ourselves physically strong or to make ourselves mentally healthy or strong, maybe to make our mind healthy and body healthy. But healthy mind is not just, you know, "healthy mind" in its usual sense, and weak body is not weak body in its usual sense. Whether it is weak or strong, when that weakness and that strength is based on so-called-it truth or buddha-nature, that is healthy mind and healthy body.

As you know, there is a kōan in *Blue Cliff Record*. It was the third kōan in *Blue Cliff Record*<sup>2</sup> and 30—maybe 35 in *Shōyō-roku*.<sup>3</sup> Sōtō use mostly *Shōyō-roku*, and Rinzai use mostly *Blue Cliff Record*, but subjects we find is same. We find same subject in a different order, with different commentary.

Anyway, the story is the—Baso—Baso—Zen master Baso, the grandson of the Sixth Patriarch—Baso Dōitsu<sup>4</sup>—the Sixth Patriarch Enō<sup>5</sup> and his disciple—his—one of the two main disciple is Nangaku,<sup>6</sup> and Nangaku's disciple is Baso. So the other—the other important disciple is Seigen.<sup>7</sup> Those are the most important lineage from the Sixth Patriarch because, under those two disciples, Zen Buddhism flourished,

<sup>1</sup> Probably referring to his throat.

<sup>2</sup> Case 3, "Master Ma Is Unwell," *Blue Cliff Record*.

<sup>3</sup> Case 36, "Master Ma Is Unwell," *Book of Serenity*.

<sup>4</sup> Jiangxi Mazu Daoyi (Jap. Baso Dōitsu): 709-788. Disciple of Nangaku Ejō, and master of many disciples.

<sup>5</sup> Daijan Huineng (Jap. Daikan Enō): 638-713. Sixth Chinese Zen Patriarch. Disciple of Daiman Kōnin, and master of Nangaku Ejō.

<sup>6</sup> Nanyue Huairang (Jap. Nangaku Ejō): 677-744. First prominent disciple of Daikan Enō, and master of Baso Dōitsu.

<sup>7</sup> Qingyuan Xingsi (Jap. Seigen Gyōshi): d. 740. Second prominent disciple of Daikan Enō, and master of Sekitō Kisen.

and we have many and many good, famous Zen masters under two—those—two of those teachers: Seigen and Baso—no, Nangaku.

Nangaku's disciple is—was Baso. Baso was a big—physically he was very strong and great—a man of great physique, like this, you know [draws in air the figure of a large man].<sup>8</sup> And when he speaks, his tongue covered [laughing] his nose. Maybe he was very fluent speaker [laughs, laughter]. But he was—once he was, you know, ill, so temple acolyte or temple master, who take care of the temple, asked him, "How are you, recently? Are you well or not?" And Baso said, "The sun-faced buddha and the man—the moon-faced buddha. The sun-faced buddha and the moon-faced buddha." *Nichimenbutsu gachimenbutsu*.

*Nichimenbutsu* is supposed to live for one thousand and eight hundred—eight hundred years. And the moon-faced buddha lives only one day—one—one day, one night. That is the "one-faced buddha." So, you know, when I am sick, I may be the moon-faced buddha [laughs]. When I—I am healthy, I am the sun-faced buddha. But "the sun-faced buddha" or "the moon-faced buddha" has no special meaning. It means that, whether I am ill or healthy, still, you know, I am practicing zazen. There is no difference. So you shouldn't worry about my health, you know. Even though I am in bed, you know, I am buddha. So don't worry about me.

And this is quite simple, you know. This is actually what we are doing every day, you know. But the difference between Baso and we ordinal [ordinary] people are—is for Baso, you know, whatever happen to him, he can accept things as it is, as it happens. But we, you know, we can not—we cannot accept everything. Something which you think is good, you may accept it. But something which you do not like you cannot—you don't accept it. And you compare one to the other. And you may say, "this is the truth; this is not true." And "he is a true Zen master; and he is not a true Zen master." And "he is good Zen student; but I am not." That is quite usual way of understanding. With this kind of understanding you cannot, you know, figure out what kind of—with what kind of idea we can—we sit every day.

To attain enlightenment means to have this kind of complete composure in our life, without any description—discrimination. But, at the same time, if we stick to this kind of attitude of non-discrimination, that is also a kind of discrimination, you know. So how we practice zazen—how we attain this kind of complete composure—is the point, you know, you should have when you start our practice.

First of all, you should know that with ordinal [ordinary], you know, effort you cannot practice our way. When I was in Japan, I also had,

<sup>8</sup> Note in brackets from original transcript.

you know, some Zen students. Some of them are very rich, and some —and some of them are very influential people. And some of them [are] just, you know, students. Some of them are—were carpenter, you know, and some of them were other workers. In Japan, you know, still we have some—not, you know, class, but some, you know—we respect, still, we treat some—someone—or mayor or teachers in some different way. We, you know, we have—we use some special—we—we have some special way of addressing them and we have—we have some way—special way to talk with him. And we—we have also special manner to them. As you say, "Yes, sir." [Laughs.] That is a kind of thing you have. But nowadays I don't think you have this kind of difference in your way of communication. But I always, you know, told them, "If you want to—if you are Zen students, you should," you know, "forget all about your position, or work, or title, and you should be just," you know, "Zen students, or else," you know, "we cannot practice zazen in its true sense."

When we—actually, when you sit I say, "Don't think," you know. "Don't think" means don't treat things in term of good or bad, you know, or heavy or light. And just, you know, accept things as it is. So even though you do nothing, you may hear, you know, and the moment—usually the moment you hear, your reaction is, "What will it be? Yeah, that is a motor car, or that's very noisy," you know. "That may be the motor cycle."

But in zazen you should not, you know, react in that way. You should just, you know, hear the big noise or small noise, and you should not be bothered by it. It looks like impossible, you know, for you, for especially for a beginner, because the moment you hear, you know, some reaction follows. But if you practice zazen—if you try—if you continuously try not to do so, just accept "things as it is," you can do it eventually.

Of course it is difficult. That difficulty is not some difficulty to—like to carry some heavy things, or to work on mathematics, you know. That difficulty is that very [?]-wants some special effort. How you can do it is to be concentrated on your posture, or breathing, or perfect physical practice. That is the only way to—to have right reaction.

That is why, you know, Zen and *samurai*, you know, is not—in Japan *samurai* practiced zazen to master, you know, sword martial art.<sup>9</sup> Martial art is not just physical things. It is, you know, the matter [of] whether he k- [partial word]—he is lose or win. So [laughs]—so long as you are—you are afraid of losing their life [laughs], they—they will be—their, you know, ability—they cannot act in his full ability. When—only when he is free from "to kill or to be killed," you know, and only when he react [to] his enemy's activity, he will—that is only way to

<sup>9</sup> See also SR-69-04-19.

win. If he try to win, he may lose. [Laughs.] So, you know, if he—how he can act without this kind of fear, which will—which will keep himself in limited activity is the most important thing. Because they had this kind of problem, they practiced Zen very hard. It is matter of, you know [laughs], whether he can survive or he cannot in battlefield. So he fought his fight in zendō, not in battlefield [laughs].

But we have not much, you know, need in our every day life, so we don't feel the necessity of this kind of practice. But our human problem we have in this world is created—are created this kind of—want of [desire for?] this kind of activity. Because we make our effort just to achieve something in its materialistic sense, or spiritual sense, we cannot achieve anything. We must achieve nothing [laughs], so that is the real meaning of nothingness.

So at first, I think, you should observe, you should understand your own everyday activity in two ways. And—and then you should be able to understand or react in one way without problem. One is, you know, dualis- [partial word]—to understand our life in dualistic way: good or bad, right or wrong. We should be—we should try hard to understand things in term of good or bad. And sometime you should unders- [partial word]—you should be able to ignore the understanding from the viewpoint of good or bad. "Good" or "bad" is just superficial understanding. But when you understand things, everything is one. Everything is one. Or all things are one. Then that is the other understanding: understanding of oneness. The understanding of duality.

At first you should be able to understand—accept things in two ways, but this is not enough. It is still dualistic. So you should be able to understand in one of the two ways without thinking, "This is one of the two understanding." So it—here you come back from starting point, but actually it is not starting point because you have freedom from—from one to the other. So you will not be bothered by it. And whatever you do, that is the great activity of the practice.

The sun-faced buddha is good; the moon-faced buddha is good. So whatever it is, that is good—that all things are Buddha. And there is no Buddha, even. But usually [when] you say "no Buddha," [laughs] it means that you stick to one—only one of the three understanding: that is, you know, "no buddha," the opposite of "buddha." [1]<sup>10</sup> Buddha, [2] no buddha, and [3] no buddha and buddha or buddha or no buddha. Whatever you say, it is all right. If you have complete, you know, understanding of it, whatever you say, it is all right. Only when you are not—you don't understand buddha, you know, you concerned about if I say there is no-buddha. "You are a priest," you

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<sup>10</sup> Numbers [1]–[3] were assigned by transcriber and could be erroneous.

know, "why—how you can say there is no buddha?! And why do you chant? Why do you bow to buddha?" [Laughs.]

To bow to buddha is "no buddha" for us. There is no buddha, so we bow to buddha. [Laughs, laughter.] If you bow to buddha because there is buddha, you know, that is not true understanding of buddha. So whatever you say, it is all right. If you say, "The sun-faced buddha, the moon-faced buddha"—*Nichimenbutsu gachimenbutsu*—no trouble. [Laughing.] Whether I am [at] Tassajara or Soko-ji, that's no trouble. [Laughs.] Should not be any trouble. Even though I die, with me it is all right, and with you it is all right. And if it is not all right, you know, you are not Zen student. [Laughs.] It is quite all right. That is buddha.

If I, you know, when I die, the moment I am dying, if I suffer, that is all right, you know. That is suffering buddha. [Laughs.] No, you know, confusion in it. Maybe everyone will struggle because of the physical, you know, agony or spiritual agony too. But that is all right. That is no—that is not problem. We should be very grateful to have limited body like me, you know, or like you. If you have limitless life, it will be a great problem for you. [Laughs.]

I'm, you know—my wife's favorite TV program is [laughs]—start from 4 o'clock and 4:30. I don't know the—what was—is the title—in Channel 7.<sup>11</sup> Some ghost, you know—problem. Some of them has, you know, has very, you know—the monsters, the people who lived, you know, long, long time ago and appear in this world, and creating many problems for people, and creating problem for himself. [Laughs.] That is what will happen.

And we are almost reaching to the moon now, but we cannot, you know, create human being in its true sense. We can create robot, but we cannot create human being. Human being is human being. We can enjoy our life only with our limited body and limited life. This limitation is vital element for us. Without limitation nothing exist, so we should enjoy the limitation. Weak body, strong body; man or woman. We should—the only way to enjoy our life is to enjoy the limitation which was given to us.

Whatever it is, you know, the limitation has some meaning—not some meaning—it has absolute meaning in it. It—that is most important point: for us to know [the] limitation. So, "the sun-faced buddha, the moon-faced buddha" does not mean, "I don't care the sun-faced buddha or the moon-faced buddha." It means that the sun-faced [hits table with stick] buddha, the moon-faced [hits table with stick] buddha, you know. We should enjoy the sun-faced buddha, the moon-faced buddha. It—it is not indifference. It is the more than

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<sup>11</sup> Possibly *Dark Shadows*, a soap opera that prominently featured a vampire.

attachment—strong, strong [laughs] attachment to the moon-faced Buddha or the sun-faced buddha. But usually our attachment—we say "non-attachment." When our attachment reach to the non-attachment, that is real attachment. So if—if you attach to something, you should attached to something completely [laughs]. The sun-faced buddha, the moon-faced buddha! "I am here," you know, "I am right here."

This kind of confidence within ourselves is important. When you have this kind of confidence in yourself, in your being, we can practice true zazen, which is beyond perfect or imperfect, good or bad.

Thank you very much.

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Source: City Center transcript. Entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997. Checked against tape and made verbatim by Dana Velden and Bill Redican (10/26/00).