

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
Thursday, August 18, 1966
SESSHIN LECTURE: Thursday, 1:00 pm
Lecture B
Soko-ji Temple, San Francisco

Before translating original text,¹ I want to make sure the understanding of—our traditional way of understanding of teaching or our understanding of practice. As being goes on and on from formed to forming,² our teaching develops on and on. It—it is new expression of old teaching in one way, and—but on the other hand it is returning to the old teaching. Actually it is the same thing. To—from Buddha to us and to—from us to Buddha, it is same thing. It is same understanding, but when we bow to him it means teaching comes from Buddha. But the teaching comes from Buddha to us means actually your experience—new experience of Buddha—return to Buddha. So it is same thing, but the understanding is different. When we say something about our teaching, there is no other way to say teaching comes from Buddha, or our teaching should go back to Buddha. That is our effort of developing Buddhism. We should not be just confined in the realm of Buddha's teaching. Always new expression is necessary, but new experience is actually going back to Buddha.

You say, in ordinal [ordinary] sense, Buddha was born 3,000 years ago, but that is not so. Buddha is here when you believe in Buddha. Your—even though you say that [?] you experience, that is Buddha's experience. There is no two buddhas. Buddha is always one. As I said last night, there is no difference in—between future and past. Past is future, future is past. So in this sense what we transmitted from Buddha to us is one—this one buddha. The understanding may be different, and if you put it in word [?] there may be two ways. But actually it is two different interpretation of one transmitted experience.

This is same as our life. Our life is always extending from old to new life. But it is, at the same time, unfolding of your true nature. Bodhidharma said, *ikke-kaigoyō*:³ one—this is [laughs] difficult. *Ikke*—*ikke* means one flower, or one bud—"one bud blooms in five petals." One—it is expression of Buddhism—one bud—one bud—one bud bloom in—you may say—every—each one of the—"each one of the buds bloom in five petals." And naturally result [in] one beautiful thing. This is, you know, one—"one bud opens in five pedals" means

¹ Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* "Sokushin-zebutsu."

² See also SR-66-08-15.

³ Literally, "One flower opens into five petals." A line from a verse attributed to Bodhidharma, one traditional interpretation being that Zen would evolve into five lineages. Bodhidharma also interpreted it as a manifestation of one's buddha-nature.

expression of—new expression of Buddha's way. Result [in] one thing —it is to believe in oneness. You say Buddhism result [in] beautiful fruit [?] here, but actually it means—it is same thing. You say this is result, but the result is not just result. Result will, you know—another way of expression. If you take more materialistic way of expression, it is flower which opens. If you take more spiritual way of expression, it is result—something result. You work for to result [in] something. That seed is Buddha, actually. Your effort will result [in] Buddha himself. But that is—in—on the other hand, that is new expression of Buddha's truth. New expression is at the same time but will result because of your effort. So this is two different way of putting [?] one experience. But usually there is a lot of misunderstanding in transmitting our way.

Buddha—when we say Buddha, then sentient being [exists]. When you say one, many is simultaneously exist. You know, one and many is [laughs] same thing, you know. If there is no many, there is no one. Do you understand? This is simultaneous existence. Because one exist—when one exist, simultaneously many exist. If Buddha exist, sentient being exist. If there is true way of Buddha, its expression follows. This—in this way, Buddhism always develops. If there is—if there is Buddha, there is someone who worship Buddha. If there is plus [positive]—plus electricity, there is at the—simultaneously, minus electricity will arise. There is no [1 word] minus electricity. Where there is plus there is minus. In this way, as a unit, plus and minus always goes. In this way, things develops.

So buddha and sentient being, student and teacher, man and woman always exist as a unit. But it does not mean man and woman is different. It is always—it exist always as a unit, and how does it exist is—we say "interdependency." In Zen we say *ego—ego-enden*.⁴ *Ego-enden* means, you know [laughs], very—you know, exist in—its relationship is vein and—ivy and vine⁵ [laughs]. Very difficult to figure out, but anyway it exist as a one unit. How does it exist is very difficult. Ivy and vine over ivy and vine. It—the relationship is so close. Actually it is one—one unit.

So in this way, everything exist. So does Buddhism: Buddhism exist in this way too. This is how Buddhism transmitted from Buddha to us. So it does not necessary mean to common people—sentient people attain buddhahood. Sentient being—when sentient being [is] sentient

⁴ *ego-enden* (Jap.): free mental penetration of two conceptions; a mind of non-attachment. *Ego* by itself means "mutual interpenetration" or "mutual interdependence" (as in the *Sandōkai*—see especially SR-70-06-03).

⁵ Suzuki-rōshi pronounced it "vein," but he was probably referring to a vine, as in Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* "Kattō": "Branches or fruit are both dependent on and independent of vines and ivy" (revised from Yūhō Yokoi, *The Japanese-English Zen Buddhist Dictionary*, p. 108).

being through and through, he is buddha himself because the relationship is so close. Actually it is one. This is how we transmitted—how we have transmitted our way.

Perfect—to give the perfect translation to *Shōbōgenzō* is almost impossible. I could not make enough preparation to translate it, but anyway I want to read it. As much—I want to make some rendering to this original text:

[Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* "Sokushin-zebutsu"]

From buddha to buddha, from patriarch to patriarch, the transmitted way without exception is "the mind itself [is] buddha." But in India it is not possible to find out the statement "buddha—mind itself is buddha." This word is originated in China,⁶ but scholars could not understand it right way. So they could not transmit the way properly. Because they could not transmit the way properly, their understanding fell into heretics. Hearing the statement "mind itself [is] buddha," people say the mind we have—the mind which have consciousness and function of consciousness and memory or decision is the mind. Moreover, the mind is the mind which does not arise—which is not the mind which is not bodhisattva-mind. Is Buddha's mind they think—they say. Why is it? Because they did not have right teacher. Heretic understanding—by heretic understanding, I mean Indian heretics named Senni.⁷ Their view of life is the true mind is within our body. How does it exist within our mind is obvious—easily to be known. The mind he has is something which is aware of suffering and pleasure, cold and warm, and pain or itchy. And that mind works over everything without any restriction, and pervade everywhere. The things may change and surrounding may change, but this mind does not change forever. This mind is all over, and there is no difference in ordinal [ordinary] mind and—there is no difference in the mind whether the mind exist in a holy man or fool—or the fool. You may say this mind makes some delusion, but, even so, this mind—once this mind resume its true function, the wisdom of this mind will reveal itself. So after things reduce to nothing and environment changes, true mind will become clear. The mind—true mind is always clear and constant. Even though our body become—our body is vanish[ed], our mind does not vanish[ed]. It is the

⁶ For example: Case 30 of *Wu-men-kuan* (Jap. *Mumonkan*, Eng. *Gateless Gate*) kōan collection: "One day a monk asked the great teacher Mazu: 'What is Buddha's mind?' Mazu said, 'Mind itself is Buddha.'"

⁷ Senni-gedō (Jap.): Senni (Senika) + gedō (non-Buddhist). An Indian non-Buddhist school led by Senika in Shākyamuni Buddha's time. It held that the body is perishable, but one's divine nature (*atman*) was imperishable.

same thing: even though the house is burned people will run—get out of the house. This divine, holy mind—sage called it the true nature and they call it buddha or enlightenment. In this mind—this mind is within our—ourselves and within others. This mind is in the fool or the enlightened. Every existence in the universe or our surrounding may not⁸ be permanent—permeable. This mind is always—does not follow the immortal—does not follow mortal being. This mind is quite different from things outside. For many kalpas of time, this mind is always constant. If—when everything was observed by this mind, everything become true. Because—because of this mind, everything arise in our consciousness is true. Although they are true, but it is not always true without our true, divine mind. This mind is called "holy mind"—"holy wisdom." This mind is called "true self." This mind is called "original self." This mind is called "ontological existence." This kind of understanding—when we have this kind of understanding, we say we resume to our true nature. This kind of mind is called "a great sage." There is no other way to get out of the birth and death. This is the way to enter the true—our true nature of the ocean. This is the only truth we know. Because we are not—because this true nature does not—when this true nature reveal itself, we say we have three worlds,⁹ six realms of being.¹⁰ This kind of understanding is heretic understanding of Senni.

Why this is—this understanding is not right is they think they materialistic—they understand [is] just naïve miserable [laughs] understanding of materialistic understanding. It is rather difficult for us, you know, to get out of this kind of understanding. Even though you talk about something spiritual [laughs], but you will put spiritual discussion into—in realm of materialistic discussion. You are not actually talking about something spiritual at all. You are talking about material. You treat spiritual being as a kind of material. You think holy mind is something which exist—substantial existence, but holy mind is not like a storm or sea [laughs]. If I say "holy mind," you will ask me where is it? [Laughs.] What is the shape of the holy mind? What does it looks like? How you—how do you find it? [Laughs.] But you cannot find it, because it is not material. You cannot discuss it in just—intellectually you cannot discuss it. The only way is, you know, to catch it in realm of duality [laughs].

⁸ Suzuki-rōshi probably did not intend to say "not." Another translation has: "It includes both the subject and the object, and it permeates both delusion and enlightenment" (Nishijima and Cross, 1994, Vol. 1, p. 50).

⁹ The three worlds: the worlds of volition, matter, and the immaterial.

¹⁰ The six miserable states: the states of beings in hell, hungry ghosts, animals, angry demons, human beings, and gods.

Dualistic understanding [laughs] is not good, you know, but [it is] better than material—materialistic understanding. You know, when you str- [partial word]—when you say "I am no good, I haven't attained enlightenment," that is not so good understanding, but it may be better than materialistic understanding of yourself—much better.

But when you realize that everything exist in dualistic way as—so when you, you know, become discriminative—"this or that, good or bad, which is—which way should I take?"—even though you take bad way, it means you are taking good ways. Good and bad always follow. It exist in—as a unit. So when you choose something good, something bad will follow [laughing, laughter]. So it may be better to choose something bad, because you are ready. And when you find something good in something bad, you will be delighted. That's much better.

So we say—in *Shushōgi* it said, *shōbō-akirano*: "To have clear understanding of birth and death is how to understand Buddhism."¹¹ When you have clear understanding [of] birth and death, you do not—you do not—you are not discriminate—discriminative about birth and death. You don't mind. If birth come [laughing] or if death come, it is same thing. No difference at all. Because it exist in its true sense as a pair, you know. So if you want something—if you want to sell something bad [laughs], people put, you know—sell—people sell it with something good. If you buy this one [laughs], you will have this one for service [?] [laughing]. But actually price is—price you pay is for good one and bad one. You are actually buying something good with something bad. Same thing will happen to us. Even though you prefer something good only to something bad, but actually what you will get is good and bad because it is pair. You cannot buy one shoes [laughs]. You have to buy a pair of shoes [laughs, laughter].

We don't mind man and woman, you know. Which is man and which is woman, you know? Sometime man [laughs] disguised in woman. That [1-2 words] good idea [1 word] because it is [1 word]. This is [2 words] [laughs]. In Japan, you know, gentleman [walk] first [laugh]—lady first. It doesn't matter. Lady first or gentleman first doesn't matter at all. There is no need to have such a strict rule [about] which is first. When, you know, you serve you help ladies. The side which feel better is the side which helped [laughs], and [the side] which was helped does not feel so good. So it doesn't matter which help which. This kind of freedom we have when we understand how we exist. This is how our way was transmitted, while the ordinal [ordinary] people just adore for something holy instead of something common. This is the—this is the difference between Buddhism and usual religion.

He referred—next he refers to the old story:

¹¹ This is essentially the first line of *Shushōgi*.

In Tang—it runs as this—in Tang dynasty there were National Teacher Echū.¹² There is a—in Tang dynasty, National Teacher of Echū in Tang dynasty was asked a priest who came from southern countries.

Then master said: "I heard of some many Zen masters in southern countries."

And that priest said, "Yes, there are many teachers in our country."

The teacher asked, "How does he instruct students?"

The priest—the monk said:

"They teaches us—they teaches them directly transmitted way which is called the mind itself is buddha. Buddha means 'enlightened one.' [Writes on chalkboard.] It has—the enlightened mind has all the consciousness and all the enlightened function. This mind makes their eyeball rise and their eyes blink. This mind act quite free. And this mind pervade all through the—our body. So if you love your head, you know you have your head. If you feel your legs, you will know you have your legs. So this mind is called 'all-pervaded mind wisdom.' But all-pervaded mind—apart from this mind, there is no buddha—there is no other buddha."

Tape operator: It looks like the second portion of this tape has been lost, except for the very end. But if not, the middle sentences lost when switching to this tape is: "This mind does not arise or perish from the endless beginning." And then the lecture begins. Hopefully.

Suzuki-rōshi:¹³ If you want to study Buddhism, you should, you know, enter the room. You should not stay at the edge of the teaching. Even though you enter our room, you will not have any restriction, you know. You are quite free. So—but you should enter

¹² Nanyang Huizhong (Nan'yō Echū): 675–775. Disciple of the Sixth Chinese Patriarch, Dajian Huineng (Daikan Enō). He taught three Tang emperors: Tang Xuan Zong, Tang Zu Zong, and Tang Dai Zong, the latter of whom gave him the title "National Master" or "National Teacher" (Jap. Kokushi).

¹³ The tape resumed, after the comment by the operator, with the following lecture fragment. It is presumed to be the end of lecture SR-66-08-18-B for the following reasons: (a) it directly followed the operator's comments; (b) it ends with "Thank you very much," and (c) Suzuki-rōshi states in the fragment that it is the fourth day of the *sesshin*, which would mean Thursday was the day the fragment of the lecture was given.

our teaching. It means not to be—not—don't try to understand it just intellectually or by means of experience only. Experience, of course, [is] important, but the more important thing is—is confidence to believe in yourself. And you should be faithful what you feel and what you think. You cannot—you should not fool yourself, you know. It is quite all right to say I cannot agree with you or cannot accept the teaching. That is all right. It is how we make our understanding deeper and deeper.

So Dōgen-zenji says, now for a while we are teacher and disciple, but we are all friends forever. And in this way we will—we can develop our way. So it does not mean just Buddhism, you know, it is our—it should be our way.

We have practiced four—*sesshin* for four days already [laughs], but I don't know what you gain [laughs, laughter]. And that is quite all right, you know, because you are already in the room here. You cannot get out of it [laughs, laughter]. Don't say, "I did not get anything here, so I must [laughs] get out of it." It is, you know—wherever you go you will have same [laughs] trouble [laughter]. Wherever you go, you will not get anything [laughs] because you have already [laughs, laughter]—because you are already in the room [laughs]. Same thing will happen to you—to us always. It does not mean I, you know, retain you in this room [laughs]. So whatever discussion you make that is quite all right [?]. But we should be faithful to [laughs]—to ourselves. And your—if your understanding is not deep enough, I will say that is not deep enough. Not wrong. There is no wrong view of life. Not wrong, but maybe one-sided or not deep enough. So we should make our understanding deeper and deeper and deeper. That is how we practice zazen—Buddhism.

When you cannot swim [laughing], if you were thrown into a deep river, you will be scared. And you—it is quite natural for you to try to get out of it, but unfortunately or fortunately it is impossible to get out of it. How to be rescued is to try to reach the bottom of the water. Then you will be—you will float [laughter]. If you try to get out of it, you will be—you will be drowned [laughter]. That is how we study Buddhism.

Thank you very much.

Source: Original City Center tape. Verbatim transcript by Adam Tinkham and Bill Redican (8/2/01).