

**Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi**  
**SUMMER *SESSHIN* LECTURE: 1 PM**  
**Thursday, July 29, 1965**  
**Lecture B**  
**Soko-ji Temple, San Francisco**

[Are there any]<sup>1</sup> questions so far I talked?

**Student A:** Why—why do we put our hands like this? And then—is—is that the best—is that—why? [Laughter.]

**Suzuki-rōshi:** This is called "cosmic *mudrā*."

**Student A:** Called what?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Cosmic *mudrā*. One of the *mudrā*—Buddha's *mudrā*. There are many and many *mudrās*. This is good question, I think. Have you some other question? I will, you know—I will talk about it.

**Student B:** Once you know buddha-nature—does it—does it—do you always know it, or do you, like, you can forget you have it and have to remember it—that you have buddha-nature?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** You do not, you know, understand what I said exactly. Yeah, I will explain it just now—then [?]. Some other question?

Maybe better to explain your question, and then some more people will have some other question, I think. I think you are—you are trying to figure out what is buddha-nature. Is that so? Because I do—did not explain what it is, but I just point it out: "This is buddha-nature." But I didn't say what it is. That is buddha-nature, you know. Something—buddha-nature is—it is impossible to understand psychological way or philosophical way or scientific way. In this—you cannot understand in this way.

So that is why we should know what is science, what is philosophy, what is some culture, science. You know, all—we should know all our mental functions or else you will say this is, you know, our religious mental function. You will say in this way. You will point out some of the mental function and say this is Buddha, this is fundamental function of our mind, you know. This is mistake. Do you understand?

I—soon after the philosophers try to establish the authority of, you know, authority of human being [laughs], human nature, they tried to figure out what is our mental function. And all the culture should be

---

<sup>1</sup> The beginning of the lecture was not recorded on tape. The phrase in brackets was inserted by the transcribers.

established by ourselves, by our human nature. So they studied what is human nature and what is our function of our mind. Pursuit for truth, pursuit for morality, pursuit for beauty are—those three are our mental functions, you know. There is no other mental function beside those three. It is true.

**Student C:** Can you say those again?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Hmm?

**Student C:** Can you say the mental functions again?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** When they tried to establish, you know, their own culture, you know—our own culture, our human culture, humanism, you know, so-called-it humanism is to establish our authority. Before, you know, the—our civilization was in Dark Age, and your civilization is under the influence of Christianity, authority of Christianity. So scientific truth is not absolute truth for you. But after Dark Age you try—philosophers, at least, tried to establish human culture. To establish human culture, they have to figure out what is our function of mind—human being—human beings—mind of human being. Now you know they count three and there is no other function in our mind.

Pursuit for truth: that is science, pure science. Pursuit for good: that is ethics. Pursuit for beauty: that is aesthetic. That—those three—there is no other culture in human being. But they could not, you know, deny their tradition, Christian tradition, religious tradition. Then what is religious tradition? What is religious function of our mind? But those—religious function is supposed to be—the combination of the three is the religious mind function. When those three functions get together and work on something, that is religious function of our mind. If one particular function of mind works, that is science or ethics or aesthetics. If three functions work together that is holy [?] function of our mind. That is, you know, your interpretation of human culture, and there is no other function of our mind.

But for Buddhism that is not [laughs]—may not—for Buddhism that is not enough. And you realize too—Western philosophers realize that that is not enough. So nowadays you do not apply this three ways of classification of our mind because, actually, to classify our function of mind makes everything clear, but it doesn't work so well, you know. If you study—even though you study ethics only, you cannot—you will not be helped by ethics. That is a kind of study, you know. You can write something but [laughs]—something interesting, but actually it is just to read, not to help you yourself actually. But that will just—you will be interested in it, that's all. And after you know that, it will—that's all, you know. You may ask, "And what?" [Laughs.] If philosopher say something you may say: "And what?" [Laughs.]

"And what it is for? I understand what you said, but what it is for? And what?" This kind of, you know, civilization is not so good, you know. It will not help you. Sometime it—you will be bound by the civilization, and more and more you will be mechanized. And you form some pattern of life, some special pattern of life. That is, I think, Western civilization.

So that is why, you know, Buddhist—for Buddhist that is very—your study helps a lot because your civilization will—how your civilization helps Buddhism is—what we want to say is: "All the mental function," you know, "so-called-it mental function, whatever it is, is not, you know, true religious function of—function. That is function of small mind. That is not function of big mind."

So if you say, "I attained enlightenment. I know what is Buddhism," then we will, you know, see your culture, your—we will open your books, you know: "Oh, this is [laughs] your enlightenment." Psychologist say so-and-so, and, "This is exactly what you meant. Do you agree with it?" [Laughs, laughter.] If you say, "This is it," then I will say that is not good [laughs]—even though I don't know what is written on the book. I can just ask you, "Is it—is this what you meant?" And if you say, "This is it," I will say, "No!" [Laughs, laughter.] It is quite simple. It makes, you know—it helps us very much in this way. Then, you know, if I say, "That is not [?]," then I can tell what it is, you know—what we mean by religious function.

I don't say religious function of my mind [laughs]. What is religious function? So religious activity is right word. Religious function of mind is not right word. What is religious activity? Religious activity is self-use [?] of big activity. Big activity—self-use of big mind is religious function. Self is not my mind or not even mind. Self-use of big—one activity. Everything works, you know, as one—all activity including the sun and the moon and ourselves, mind and body and everything. That is what we mean by religious function. If so, you cannot figure out by your small mind.

So if science and philosophers work together in big scale, that is true, you know. That is true study. If they work together, with mutual understanding—when they want to work together, there should be some mutual understanding under some system. At least, each scientist and philosopher should know the limit of their work: "This is your study and this is my study.: This kind of, you know, preparation is necessary, and Dōgen was very much—very, very strict with this idea.

**Student D:** You once said that to climb the mountain you have to come back down, and if you become enlightened you won't need enlightenment. Would you say more about that?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** If you—oh I see. What was your question? No—no, your question [Student A].

**Student A:** My question was about the—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Oh, cosmic *mudrā*. Cosmic *mudrā*, you know, and your question [are] related. Cosmic *mudrā* is—this is—to sit is to participate. This is not right word, but to—to participate—self-use of big existence—one whole existence including everything. So this is, you know, one sole existence, the symbol of one big existence including everything. So it is symbol of our practice.

When we, you know, practice our practice beyond our understanding, when we just participate in big activity, this is big activity—we are participating [in] the big activity. And to come—to come up is, you know—you come up all the way to the summit by studying many things. Scientific study and various study you will do. Not—you are not scientist or philosopher, but your—all of your life will be classified or will be interpreted in three ways, you know. And you are making effort to know what is science, what is—not "what is science," but you are trying to improve yourself in various way, mostly maybe emotional way. But anyway you are trying to improve yourself in various way. And more and more you will—not "tired out," but you will know that you cannot—

*[Possible break in recording of unknown duration.]*

—what are you actually—for what you are actually working for. Or what is your basic intention to do something—to do, to live, or to do something. Then, sooner or later, you will reach the same point, which is inmost request or enlightenment or whatever you say [is] buddha-nature. Then all what you do—you will find out all what you do is based on—has been based on your inmost request. Before you didn't know that. You are just wandering about. But after that, you will know the oneness of wandering about and enlightened life. Before you realize your inmost nature, you know, that is—for you, that is wandering about. But for Buddha it is not so. But for you it is wandering about. Once you know what it is—what it was for, you will find out the meaning of what you have been doing. This is to go up and to come down. This is big scale of understanding [laughs]—understanding of big, big scale. It does not mean to be a philosopher or to be a, you know, Zen master. It is possible for everyone.

**Student E:** Is it possible for everyone [2-4 words] previous lecture [4-8 words] too late?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Hmm? Too late?

**Student E:** Yes, for some people it's too late in this life.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** [Laughs.] I mean too late—I mean when you are too old to—not too late, but you will regret, "Why didn't I realize this before?" It is not too late, but when you are, so I do [do I?]-when you lose your present moment—I should say if you don't work hard, it will be too late. You must not be always too late [laughs, laughter] or too fast. Truth is here, you know, right here. You should not be too late or too fast. Right here. It is written on your back [laughing, laughter]. All the scriptures is written on your back and front. If you do not realize it, you should write. Do you know Lafcadio Hearn?<sup>2</sup>

**Student:** Mm-hmm.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Lafcadio Hearn—the—I don't know what nationality he—he—

**Several students:** Lafcadio Hearn. [A few inaudible comments.]

**Student:** Was he an American writer?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Hmm? Is he American—an American?

**Student:** No, I don't believe so.

**Students:** [Mostly inaudible comments. Last one repeats the name of Lafcadio Hearn.]

**Suzuki-rōshi:** He is very familiar to Japanese people. He lived in my home town, and—Yaizu<sup>3</sup> and Matsue<sup>4</sup>—he thought Matsue or Yaizu is

---

<sup>2</sup> (Patrick) Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904): essayist, journalist, and teacher. Son of an Irish father and Greek mother, Hearn settled in Japan in 1890 after living in America for several years. In Japan he taught English and wrote extensively about the country, its myths, and its history. His essays became the West's most popular source of information about the recently "opened" Japan.

<sup>3</sup> Yaizu, in Shizuoka Prefecture, is where Suzuki-rōshi's temple Rinso-in is located. Yaizu is a fishing village facing the Pacific Ocean, southwest of Mishima on Honshū, the main island of Japan. From 1897 until his death in 1904, Hearn spent every summer at the seacoast in Yaizu, on the second floor of a fish shop owned by Yamaguchi Otokichi, whom Hearn regarded as "the most amiable Japanese he had ever known." As Suzuki-rōshi was born in 1904, he may have bought fish from the very same Mr. Yamaguchi or passed by his shop. Hearn's 1899 essay "At Yaidzu," from *In Ghostly Japan*, describes a Bon festival in Yaizu.

<sup>4</sup> Matsue, in Shimane Prefecture, is a castle city near the Japan Sea, along the northern coast of Honshū. Hearn lived there briefly while teaching English at a local school. His impressions of Matsue are recorded in his 1894 essay

his native town. He wrote many books about Japan and many interesting books. Dr. Kato [?] was studying about him. And one of the story he wrote was "Miminashi Hōichi."<sup>5</sup>

There was a *biwa* player,<sup>6</sup> you know, *biwa* player—*biwa*, a kind of—something like guitar—guitar. And once he played at Dan-no-ura.<sup>7</sup> Dan-no-ura is where the Heike family<sup>8</sup> at last was killed by Genji family.<sup>9</sup> There was big fight between Genji and [laughs]—Genji family and Heike family. Japan was divided in two. And Heike family supported—husband supported emperor. And after the battle, Heike family lost. And all the prince and court ladies and young prince was drowned to death in Dan-no-ura. It is near Shikoku, you know. Do you know famous Inland Sea in Japan?<sup>10</sup> At the end of the Inland Sea there is Dan-no-ura. There they fought a big fight. And at last they all—the Heike family and his men was drowned to death.

And there is big crabs, you know, because Heike and—all the crabs became [laughs]—all the Heike family became—change into a crab at the bottom of the sea. That is—people say that is why that crab has a shell like a demon, like a, you know, devil or the—its shell has a kind—kind of face, grimace face [laughs, laughter], angry face.<sup>11</sup>

---

"In a Japanese Garden," from *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan*.

<sup>5</sup> Hearn's story "Miminashi Hōichi" ("Earless Hōichi"), from *Kwaidan* (1904), is an example of a literary work based on *The Tale of the Heike* (*Heike monogatari*), a famous epic about the rise and fall of the Heike (Taira) clan and the eventual victory of the Minamoto (Genji) clan.

<sup>6</sup> A *biwa* is a Japanese stringed instrument resembling a lute. Suzuki-rōshi is probably referring to a *biwa-hōshi*, one of the blind storytellers who memorized and recited (in a style similar to a Buddhist chant) *The Tale of the Heike* throughout Japan as they played the *biwa* in accompaniment.

<sup>7</sup> Dan-no-ura (also Dannoura): A beach along the Shimonoseki Straights, in the extreme southwest tip of Honshū, Japan, near which a critical naval battle was fought in 1185 when the Genji decisively defeated the Heike. This battle brought the Gempei war to an end and began the Kamakura Era of shōguns.

<sup>8</sup> The Heike (Taira, Reike, or Reiji) clan held great power during the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. They engaged in a protracted struggle with the Genji (Minamoto) clan. The story cited by Suzuki-rōshi refers to the defeat of the warlord Taira Munemori (1147–1185) by Genji forces in 1185.

<sup>9</sup> The Minamoto (Genji) clan, from whom descended the three great shōgun families: Minamoto, Ashikaga, and Tokugawa.

<sup>10</sup> Inland Sea: the sea south of the Honshū mainland, between Honshū and the islands of Shikoku and Kyūshū. Dan-no-ura is at the extreme west end of the Inland Sea.

<sup>11</sup> Some Heike crabs (*Heike-gani*) have a shell that resembles the face of a scowling samurai—the vanquished samurai army of the Heike clan. Such crabs are considered sacred and are returned to the sea if caught by local fishermen. In that sea are also golden fish called Koheike, which are regarded as the embodiment of Heike women who drowned at Dan-no-ura.

And he<sup>12</sup> played guitar [*biwa*] at the temple near the cemetery of Heike family. And he was so good that all the spirits of the defeated soldiers and princes and court girls came out from the cemetery [laughs]. And he—they tried to take him to the cemetery or to the cemetery yard or into the ground even. But he was so scared every night that he asked the help—asked the help of the priest—resident priest. So he [the priest] wrote *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* on his body. So—and he said, "This is all right, you will be safe." [Laughs.] So he was sleeping, but all the demons came. And the demons could not see him, you know, could not find out where he is even though he—they came. But someone said, "Here he is!"—and drawing his sword and cut off his ears [laughs]. Next morning the resident priest found him, his ears cut off from his body. And he asked what happened. "What has happened to you?" And he says, "They cut my ears off." Resident priest find his ears—both. On it—there is nothing written on it. So that is why he was found [laughs, laughter].

You know, the Buddha's teaching—actual Buddha's teaching is nowhere. You cannot find out. Because you cannot find out there is everywhere, you know. If you say this is Buddha's teaching, that is wrong. It should not be [laughs]—it should not be found out. That is right. If, you know—if you think, "This is Buddha's teaching, it's his whole body, a part of his body," it is wrong understanding. You should write Buddha's teaching on his ears too [laughs]. It should be everywhere. If it is, you know—the teaching for some part of your body or life, that is not Buddha's teaching. It covers everything. It should be so. Because it covers everything, you cannot find out what it is, because it is, you know, one with everything. If it is one with everything, how can you find it out?

So we—we religious people deny—deny the existence of the teaching, you know. We—I say there is no Buddhism actually, I say. And those who believe in Buddhism will say there is no Buddhism. And it is true for us. But if a scientist say there is no Buddhism, that is big mistake [laughs, laughter]. We can say there is no Buddhism. If some philosopher says: "Philosophy include everything. We can establish," you know, "authority of human being by ourselves without any god of religion," that is big, big [laughs] mistake. But only those who believe in our teaching can say there is no Buddhism. When there is no Buddhism, you attained enlightenment. But if someone say—talking about Buddhism all over the night, drinking beer [laughs], smoking cigarettes [laughs, laughter], is Buddhism. "Oh, this is Buddhism. There is no—actually there is no such a tradition of Buddhism. This is Buddhism." That's not, you know, Buddhism. Those who practice—

---

<sup>12</sup> Hōichi is the name of the *biwa-hōshi* in Hearn's story "Miminashi Hōichi" ("Earless Hōichi"). He played the lute and "chanted the chant of the fight on the bitter sea" at Dan-no-ura for the samurai, royal, and other Taira ghosts of the battle.

those who participate in cosmic self, self-use of cosmic existence, can deny Buddhism. For—for—for them—for us there is no Buddhism, no particular Buddhism. But for them there are Buddhists [laughs] because they have their own field of study, and Buddhism is something different from their understanding of their study or way of study. Did you understand?

That is to go up and to go down. That is cosmic [laughs] symbol. Here we have cosmic circle. There is no Buddhism in this realm. So we say, "Just sit. There is no Buddha or no good or bad."

Tonight we have discussion, and Bishop Sumi<sup>13</sup> will come on Saturday morning. He will join us from one o'clock. And he will give us lecture from one o'clock. So if you have question, please ask me before he comes.

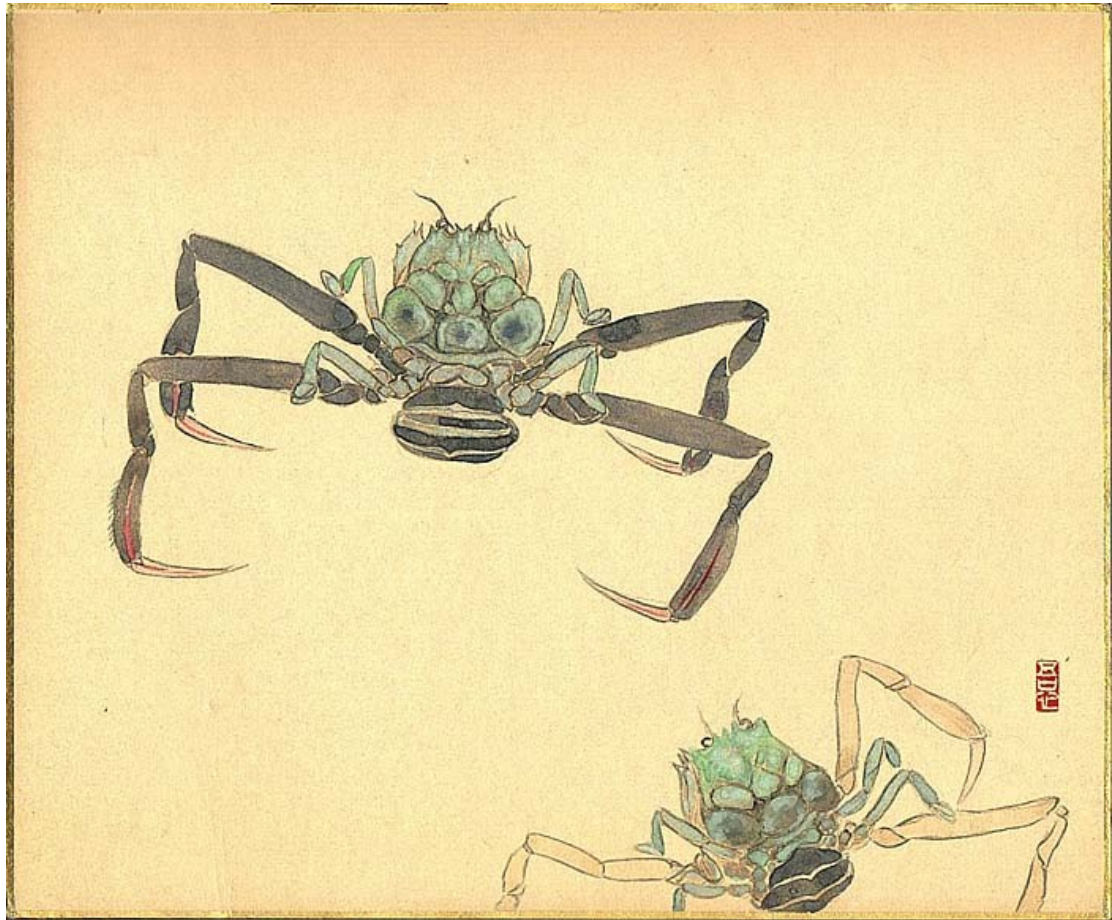
---

Source: City Center original tape. Verbatim transcript by Diana Bartle and Bill Redican (7/22/01).

---

<sup>13</sup> Bishop Sumi Togen: formerly an instructor of monks at Sōji-ji, in 1965 he succeeded Yamada Reirin as head of the Sōtō Zen School in America.





Heike Crabs of  
Dan-no-ura Bay