

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
December 17, 1966
DECEMBER ONE-DAY *SESSHIN* LECTURE: Saturday 1 PM
Lecture A

Tape operator: This is the one o'clock lecture on the Saturday, December 17th *sesshin*.

Suzuki-rōshi: In the first instruction of ten instructions in *Gakudō-yōjin-shū*,¹ Dōgen-zenji emphasize to arise the way-seeking mind. And way-seeking mind, according to him, is the mind to—the mind to—to have direct feeling of evanescence of life. When we feel the evanescence of life directly, we will not have any more ego-centered idea. And our practice will be quite pure and strong. And on each moment, we will do our best in our practice. That is the most important point in our way.

And in the second instruction, he emphasize the immediate respond [response] to the teaching. And according to him, even listen to the teaching is the practice—not only zazen practice. It is not actually—after you hear the teaching and practice zazen and attain enlightenment. The attaining enlightenment and to practice zazen and to hear the instruction is one, and three takes place simultaneously. That is his understanding of to here.

So he emphasize the training when encount[er]ing the true law. To meet the true law is also a part of training. It is the training itself. That is what Dōgen-zenji meant. But usually in Buddhism, we have order, you know. To hear, we say *mon-shi-shu*: *mon* is "to hear"; *shi* is "to think"; and *shu* is "to practice." This order does not happen to us one after another, or one by one. It happens simultaneously. This is a very important point.

And today we will continue his instruction, and start with the third instruction of *Gakudō-yōjin-shū*:²

The Need for Entering Enlightenment through Constant Practice

Ordinary people thinks that riches stems from study. The Buddha says, however, that enlightenment dwell within training. I have never heard of anyone who came on riches without study or who gained enlightenment without training.

¹ *Points to Watch in Buddhist Training*, a fascicle written by Dōgen in 1234.

² Suzuki-rōshi is reading from *Gakudō-yōjin-shū*, Section 3, in Reihō Masunaga (Ed. and Trans.), *Zen for Daily Living*, Tōkyō, Shunjūsha Publishing, 1964, pp. 56–72.

"Riches" here it says, but it is a "fief" or—or stipend—stipend. You know, when in old—ancient time, when someone start- [partial word] —when someone is capable—according [to] his capability, he may receive some land—not exactly land, but some rise from the land. That was the old system, especially in feudal age in Japan. So:

Ordinary people thinks that fief stems from study. Buddha says, however, that enlightenment dwell within training. I have never heard of anyone who came to fief—who had a fief—who had a fief—fief—excuse me—fief without study or who gained enlightenment without training.

And next paragraph:

It is true that training difference[s] exist—between belief and law, between abrupt and gradual. Yet one attains enlightenment by training. It is true that method of study differ. Some are shallow or deep; other, sharp or dull. Yet one gain fief by accumulated study. All this does not depend on the superiority or inferiority of kings or on the lack of plenitude of luck.

It is true that training differs. There are many training—many kinds of training, even in Zen. Here he refer to the belief and law. Belief and law. It means that according to the people, Buddha gave teaching in appropriate way.

And in Buddhism, we have three period,³ which is the age—period of right law, and period of imitative law, and period of last—the period of the last period. So the—in the period where—when Buddhism was very powerful, it is necessary—it may—there may be someone who really attain enlightenment. So there were, according to some thought—Buddhist thought—at the first period, which is five hundred years after Buddha's passed away—passing away, there were, they thought, the true law, and people who practice the right practice, and people who attained enlightenment actually as Buddha did.

And that was five hundred years after Buddha passed away. But someone said one thousand years [laughs] after he passed away. One thousand years after he passed away is period of right law. And next one thousand year is period of imitative Buddhism, where—when there are no enlightened person, just people there just imitating Buddhism

³ *Shōzōmatsu*: The three periods after the death of Shākyamuni Buddha: *shōbō* (righteous law), *zōbō* (imitative law), and *mappō* (last law). There are at least four views on the length of *shōbō* and *zōbō* in Zen literature (see, e.g., *Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, p. 299). See also *Sandōkai* Lecture III, SR-70-06-01.

[laughs]. That is second one thousand years. And the third one thousand years, they have just teaching: no practice, no enlightenment. That is the last period. There is—they believe—some Buddhist believed in those three period.

But some say the first five hundred years is the period of right law. The first five—second five hundred is period of imitative Buddhism, and the third five hundred is the last period. And last period will continue one—ten thousand years, and Buddhism will vanish. When Buddhism vanished, Bodhisattva Miroku [Maitreya] will appear instead of Shākyamuni Buddha. That is the story.

The Kamakura Period,⁴ when Dōgen appeared, was the first—the beginning of the last period. But he did not believe in those three period. He thought if you practice right way, right practice, enlightenment is there. So whenever we practice zazen, there is Buddhism. And there is no difference in—between first, second, and third period. So for him it is quite ridiculous to believe in the three period. So he did not believe in the three period. This is, you know—this idea is the relationship between dharma and people who believe in it, or relationship between teaching and people.

People, you know, may be divided in three period: people who were with Buddha, people who was born long after Buddha passed away, [and] people who was born thousands of years after Buddha. So this relationship is relationship the people who believe in Buddhism, or kinds of people who believes in Buddhism. So this—so "belief" [in *Gakudō-yōjin-shū*] means, you know, people who believe in [Buddhism]. And "law" means the teaching. So between belief and law, accor- [partial word]—between belief and law, there were various kinds of understanding and practice. So the relationship—understanding of what is—the understanding of the relationship between law and people who believe in, there may be various sect and various practice in Buddhism. So he briefly says:

Between belief and law, between abrupt and gradual.

After the Sixth Patriarch,⁵ as you know, there were two schools: two outstanding—Zen was divided in two. One is gradual, and the other is sudden. The Sixth Patriarch's and his disciple—disciples were called "sudden school." And disciple of Jinshū,⁶ who failed to receive transmission, was called "gradual school." But this is not true, you

⁴ The period from 1192 to 1333, during which the Kamakura shōgunate governed Japan.

⁵ Daijān Huineng (Daikan Enō): 638-713.

⁶ Yuquan Shenxiu (Gyokusen Jinshū): 605?-706. Dharma heir of Daman Hongren. Founder of the Northern School of Chan Buddhism. (See *Denkoroku*, Ch. 34.)

know, too. In the *Platform Sūtra*, as you know—in the *Platform Sūtra* the Sixth Patriarch denounce the gradual school. But that—that was not true. Those statement is added long after the Sixth Patriarch passed away. And there is no difference between gradual or sudden. They are all one—one whole school.

But after the Sixth Patriarch, 250 or 200 years of—after, they—some of the hasty-minded Zen disciples denounced the disciples of Jinshū and, you know, compiled the *Platform Sūtra*. So people at that time thought there is two schools in Zen [laughs]. But there is no two schools. We should be gradual and sudden school. Why we are sudden school is, you know, moment after moment we have enlightenment. When you practice zazen, there is enlightenment always. So we are sudden school. But if you do not continue it, you know, that is not right practice. So [laughing], as long as you continue it, that is gradual school. Sudden and gradual: that is our study. So there is no particular schools which is called "sudden school" or "gradual school." This is the big mistake, but they—some people thinks there is gr- [partial word]—in Zen there is gradual school and sudden school.

Yet one attained enlightenment by training.

There are many understanding of—way of understanding of Buddhism. And there is various practice in Zen, but:

One attains enlightenment by training.

Training is necessary. And without training, you cannot have—attain—you cannot attain enlightenment.

It is true that method of study differed. Some are shallow or deep; others, sharp or dull.

People say, you know, "he has shallow understanding of Buddhism," or "deep understanding of Buddhism." But even though they have deep understanding of it, if they do not practice it, it means nothing.

Others, sharp or dull.

"Sharp people" or "dull people," you may say, but in our practice there is no sharp people or dull people.⁷ When you stop your mind [laughing], who is clever and who is dull? There is no difference. Because you have, you know, wrong understanding in our practice, and remain in intellectual understanding, so there is—you think shallow—sharp one will attain enlightenment faster [laughs]. Dull one will attain—for dull one it will take for a long time. But that is not true

⁷ See also the *Sandōkai* lectures (e.g., SR-70-05-30).

either. There are many and many famous Zen masters who was [laughing] very dull [laughter]. Even in Japan there are many—many of them [laughter]. It is not matter of clever or dull.

And in Buddhism, good—*jōkon* is—we mean—*jōkon gekon*, we say.⁸ *Jōkon* is people who is—who may—who will easily understand Buddhism or will attain enlightenment quicker is *jōkon*. *Gekon* is not so, you know, not—means not—Buddhism is not fit to those people. Those people are called *gekon*. *Jōkon* does not means "clever," but, you know—clever one is—maybe his cleverness will be—because of his cleverness, he—it will take a longer time to attain enlightenment. So cleverness is one of the, you know, barrier [laughs]. So clever people is not *jōkon*. [Laughs.] Do you understand? So you—you may say "dull," but dull does not mean—here it says "dull," but this is not appropriate translation. "Suitable people to Buddhism" is *jōkon*.

There—if we do not have met right teacher, we cannot study. That is one difficulty. Even though we met him, if we do not study, because of some deficiency, that is another difficulty. And clever people—cleverness is one of the three difficulties [laughs, laughter]. And this is very true [laughs].

Yet one gains fief by accumulated study. All this does not depend on the superiority or inferiority of lord or—lord, or on the lack of plenitude of luck.

It is—it depends on its own practice. Even [if] the lord is rich [laughs] or good, if you do not study he will not—you will not get anything from him. That is what he meant.

If riches can be gained without study—if fief can be gained without study, who can transmit the method by which a superior ruler knows how to control or ruin a nation?

If we do not practice, it is impossible for us to realize—to bring Buddhism in reality—realization.

If enlightenment can be gained without training, who can—how can we perfect the teaching of Buddhism—teaching of the Buddha who knows delusion and enlightenment?

Understand that when you train within the delusive world, full enlightenment is already there. When you realize that boat and rafts—raft—rafts are like yesterday's dream, you forever abandon the old view that bound you to the sūtras.

⁸ *Ibid.*

If you practice it, the Buddhism is there, and enlightenment is there. So what was written in scriptures is like an old boat by which you came across. But people just believe in what was written in scripture, and believe in the three period of—in Buddhism, and ignore the practice. And even practice it, you are expecting something after practice. Then those practice is the daydream or old boat by which you came across. [Laughs.] You should forget all about old boat. "Old boat" means sūtras.

You forever abandon the old view that bound you to the sūtras —when you realize that boat and rafts are like yesterday's dream⁹—because you have enlightenment there.¹⁰

The Buddha did not force this. It comes from the effort of those who seek the way.

Buddha did not force anything to us. Even though he force—forces something on us, if we do not practice it [laughs], there is no Buddhism for us. Buddha did not force this. It comes from the effort of those who seeks the way.

Training invites enlightenment. Your own treasure do not comes from the outside. Enlightenment comes into its own—its own with training. How can enlightened action leave my traces? If we look back on training with enlightenment—enlightened eyes, we see no dust. If we look back on training with enlightened eyes, we see no dust. Looking for traces is like trying to stop a while—stop [spot] a white cloud ten thousand miles away.

"If you—if you look back on training with enlightened eyes, we see no dust." "Dust" or "stain" means dualistic idea. So if you look back on training with enlightened eyes, we see no dust—we have no dualistic idea. Or you—because you have dualistic idea, you cannot see the enlightenment on your practice. That is what he meant.

Look[ing] for traces is like trying to stop [spot] a white cloud ten thousand miles away.

You cannot stop [spot]—you cannot stop [spot] the white cloud which is ten thousand miles away. But looking for traces, you know: "What is enlightenment?" And, "This is enlightenment," or "That is enlightenment." "My enlightenment is like this," and "My master's enlightenment like this." And "This is the enlightenment." "That is not enlightenment." If you try to see the enlightenment in this way, the

⁹ Suzuki-rōshi reversed the order of the clauses in this sentence.

¹⁰ Possibly a reference to a prior line: "Understand that when you train within the delusive world, full enlightenment is already there."

enlightenment is one thousand—ten thousand miles away. When you just practice it, with sincerity, there is already enlightenment. So if you have enlightened eyes, you will see the enlightenment on each moment. Even though [laughing], you know, you are dis- [partial word]—you are—you do not think your practice is good, enlightenment is there. And some day, you will find out what you have been doing [laughter]. But now, maybe, you are pretty tired of sitting. You may be sleepy sometime, and you think there is no enlightenment in our practice. Because—that is because you have no eyes to look upon you—on yourself. But even [though] you cannot, you know, see it, there is enlightenment.

Anyway, as long as you practice, you cannot, you know—you have no reason why you should stay—you should stop practice [laughs]—why you should give up. There is no reason. We are completely, you know, caught by zazen [laughing]. Completely caught by it. You may—you can stop it one or two days, or one year or two years. Or you—you may think, "I shall not practice zazen any more as long as I am alive." But still you cannot get out of it. You are still in zazen. You cannot escape our zazen, and you have no reason. This is the un- [partial word]—what is zazen. You think you can, that's all. But actually you cannot.

If you step on the enlightenment—

We cannot step on a speck of dust.

If you try to step on the enlightenment, you cannot step on it. You do not step [on] even dust of—a speck of dust. When—enlightenment is not something to step on it. So even though you try to do it, you cannot step on it.

If you do, heaven and earth fall apart. Here, if we return, we will transcend even the statue [status] of the Buddha.

If we return—"return" means to be beyond our consciousness—conscious world, or even pure conscious world. We say we return: Return means "to go home," you know. Home is—our home is a pure—is in pure consciousness, or unconscious world. That is our home. And our everyday activity—that we work in conscious world means to go out of it and to work on outside, you know [laughs]. So to return means to go back to pure consciousness or direct experience.

So if—he says "if we return." We say, *taiho jōtō*. *Jōtō* means to have direct transmission. *Taiho* is to re- [partial word]—retreat, retrogression. *Taiho*. Not go on, but go back.

So this expression is very negative, from the view—from the viewpoint of bodily [?] gaining idea. But this viewpoint—this word is very positive word. *Taiho jōtō*.

If we return, we will transcend even the statue [status] of Buddha.

It means there is no Buddha even. When you, you know, get beyond the conscious world and when you are in pure conscious—consciousness there is no Buddha even. That is our practice.

Anyway, it may be pretty difficult to understand what he really means, but if you practice hard and seek for the truth, then you will find out what does he mean.

Thank you very much.

Source: City Center original tape. Verbatim transcript by Bill Redican (6/4/01).