

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
Sunday, August 3, 1969
Tassajara

As most of you know, this is Yoshimura Ryogen-sensei.¹ Ryogen Yoshimura-sensei. In Japanese way we say family name first, so Yoshimura Ryogen. But—Yoshimura is family name. Ryogen-sensei, or Yoshimura-sensei. He was appointed—he arrived at San Francisco as our teacher, or as our friend, March 27?

Off-mike: Yes.

March 27. And mostly he was in—he has been in San Francisco. I think he came here once? Twice?

Off-mike: Twice.

Twice. So most of you know, I think, know him. But as some of you may not know him, so I think it is better to introduce him to you. Thank you very much.

Last night I talked about the teaching of selflessness and the teaching of suffering too—not completely, but briefly about what is our suffering. May be better to explain about the selflessness more, because that is very important teaching which is directly related to the teaching of Zen.

We practice zazen so that we attain selflessness. This is very, you know, important and very subtle thing, the matter of self. We don't know where is ourself, but it is very tenacious one, as you know [laughs]. Even though you think you are pretty well, but it is not so. Why selflessness means, you know—why we say "selflessness" [is] because each one of us is not substantial being. You think you are here, but there is no such thing as "you" exist here. You are not ghost, but [laughs] at this moment, at this place, you exist here, but you don't exist here so many times. It is just, you know, just tentative being which is always changing. We know that by here [possibly pointing], you know, but it is almost impossible to get rid of this idea of self or feeling of self.

To change, you know, to have good understanding is easy, we say, but to have right—I don't know what to say—to have right feeling or to accept it completely emotionally is very hard. Even though you know

¹ Sōtō monk who came from Japan to San Francisco in 1969 to help Suzuki-rōshi. (See *Wind Bell*, 1970, Vol. IX, No. 1, p. 30.) He died at a young age after returning to Japan.

it, you know, but actually you have no feeling of it. Emotionally you don't accept it.

So it is easy to get rid of idea of self intellectually, like break small lock, you know. It is not so difficult to break some small lock if you hit it [with a] big hammer, you know, it is quite easy. But it is difficult to get rid of habitual thinking, or habitual way of thinking, or habitual way of understanding, or emotional, you know, feeling of it. [It] is as difficult as to break lotus root, you know [laughs]. To break lotus root is quite easy if you right. You think I have diamond. I break—broke it in two like this. But string is, you know, still here in between, even though [laughs] you pull as much as you can, string is always follows. It is so hard, like to break a lotus root in two. I think that is very true.

Dōgen-zenji was so kind to explain this point in the—one of the fascicle of *Shōbōgenzō*, "Sansuikyō"—the sūtra of Mountain and Water Sūtra."² Mountain—what is mountain? What is water? We know—we think we know what is mountain and what is the water. Of course you know. But water for human being, [is] of course water. But for the people in hell it is blood, you know, water is blood. For fish or for dragon, who live in water, [water] is a beautiful palace [laughs]. And for human being, that is water.

He says a dragon or a fish knows—understand water is blood or palace—their own home, but they don't understand the palace for them is the water—is water for the human being. But you know—you think you know what is water. You are not like a fish, or like a dragon, or like a hungry ghost. "I know water," you know. But Dōgen-zenji says you don't know [laughs] water. You are almost same as—almost ignorant as the dragon or hungry ghosts in heaven. Even though you say you know what is water, Dōgen-zenji said you don't know actually what is water.

I think that is why you don't understand why he took the water—leftover water, to take it to the river and return it to the river.³ Maybe—maybe he knows what is water, but we don't know what is water, maybe, according to him. Do you think [laughs] what is water then? He says, "You don't know [laughs] what is water. You are almost as ignorant as the fish." So he says mountain is mountain and water is water. This is point we should study or understand even in intellectual way.

² See also Lecture SR-69-08-07 and SR-71-07-24.

³ Referring to the story of Dōgen respectfully returning the unused half of the water in his ladle to the river at Hanshaku-kyo, a bridge beyond the entrance gate of Eihei-ji. (See also "Nirvana, the Waterfall," in *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, p. 92, and Lecture SR-69-08-01.)

I said last night—I explained last night how everything exist in this world. The teaching how things exist in this way is teaching of interdependency. [Brief exchange off-mike.] Teaching of interdependence. Actually I explained last night, but may be better to repeat it.

That something exists means that some other thing exist before—in time-span before. Because something exist before, something else exist later here. Because this exist or because that exist, this exist here. And that something exists here means, at the same time, some other thing in space-span exist, you know. That you exist—that I exist here means you exist here at the same time. And that I exist here means my father existed. Because my father existed, I exist here. In this way, we are closely related to something else. So we do not—we cannot exist just as a independent being from others. It means that, that something exist here, the rest of things exist here. And many things exist—existed in past time.

So, you know, if water, if, you know, if water is here, you know, it means that mountain exist, and fish exist, and the stone exist, tree exist, frog exist, stars exist, moon, and milky river, and everything exist. So we said that water exist, you know, you—you—you may say that. When water exist, everything is water, you know. The water is representative of the whole world. So whole world is water. Nothing can compare to the water because the water is closely related to other things. So actually water may not be water. But if we say, "This is water," the rest of things can be the same thing. May be the water too. Just for convenience sake, we name it "water," that's all. When we reach this kind of understanding, even intellectually, we said—we may be said to have understood what Dōgen meant by "water."

You exist here, you know, helping you. But actually there is no borderline between you and I. For me, you are everything. you know. When I—as long as I am here, you are everything. You know, like water, for—like for water everything is just water, just for water. A husband is—for your husband, you are everything [laughs]. There is nothing but you for your husband right now. When you reach this kind of understanding, you know, you will live in this moment in its true sense. As long as you understand things in term of duality" "I am here and he is there," as if there is no relationship between you and others.

So water is not just water. The water I drink, if I drink a cup of water, the water is everything for us right now when—as long as I am drinking it. With this kind of feeling and spirit, you have to drink water, and you have to treat others. There is no separation between us.

So you say "star," star is only one being which include everything. If you say "mountain," mountain include everything. For mountain, you know, everything is just for himself. Do you understand? And if you reach this kind of experience by practice, you are said to have been practicing zazen. Do you understand?

So there is no wonder why Dōgen-zenji says, "Water for you is just like water for the fish," because actually a fish doesn't know what is water. Even though you said you know what is water, but you don't know actually what it is. And you have no feeling of real water. That is something which is very little to do with you. You do not appreciate water. So there is no wonder why he had to—he couldn't help to return the leftover water to the river. Okay? [Laughs.] There's big, big difference—even—in *Kegon Sūtra*. So how we exist in this world is very miraculous way. Even though you can reach to the moon, you cannot explain this point.

According to *Kegon Sūtra*, you know, how we exist is—he—sūtra—the sūtra says, "I am Vairochana Buddha,⁴ who is sitting on a big lotus in—in a big miraculous shape of lotus named Lotus Seed. And in the Lotus Seed there is a lotus—big lotus. And sitting on it. And the lotus has thousands—a thousand leaves." Do you say "leaves"?

Students: Petals.

"Petals. Thousand petals. And I incarnated into thousand buddha and sit in each petals of the," you know, "lotus. And in each—in each petal—and then in each petals there is"—how many there [laughs]? "There is hundred millions of Sumeru Mountain⁵—one millions of Sumeru Mountain, and—no, no, hundred millions of Sumeru Mountain—Mountains, and hundred millions of Four Seas, and hundred million of the world called **Naiyenbudai**."

So it makes—how—how much, you know, world there is. And in each world there is Bodhi tree. And under the Bodhi tree there are Bodhisattva Shākyamuni practicing zazen to attain enlightenment. And after he attain enlightenment, he will tell you the true sto- [partial word]—true law. And that is very true, you know. In this world—I don't know how many beings is in this world. Even we don't know how many stars there are in this cosmic world. I think much more than one hundred million of world or earth, and that is very true.

⁴ One of the five transcendent buddhas.

⁵ In traditional Buddhist/Hindu cosmology, Mount Sumeru (Meru, Jap. Shumi-sen) is regarded as the center of the four continents (i.e., the world-system or universe) as well as the largest entity in that universe.

And in each world there is Shākyamuni Buddha, who know the truth, who know what is water, what is this Bodhi tree, what is petals of lotus. So this is just, you know, a way of expressing the truth, but actually we cannot figure out how things exist in its true sense. That is actually the teaching of selflessness or teaching of interdependency.

Only when you understand our world or—in this way we will be free from suffering. So every existence is just for you, you know. If you ignore this fact, that is, you know, ignorance [laughs]. Ignore the truth. You ignore the fact—this fact. Even though you cannot describe it, it is true.

And now I think I have to explain the Four Noble Truths: how to—how we should get out of the suffering. The Four Noble Truths are: All existence is suffering. The second, the cause of suffering—what is cause of suffering? Cause of suffering is because of our ignorance we don't, we do not know how we exist here. So cause of suffering is illusion or ignorance and desires based on ignorance. Desires—there is nothing wrong to have desires, but if the desire is based on, you know—based on ignorance, it is like a—like to, you know, drive a car when you are drunk [laughs]. You don't know where to go with the desire. It is good to have a brand new car. That is okay. But, you know, you must drive the car pretty well, you know. You shouldn't be drunk. The cause of suffering is delusion [illusion?] and desire based on ignorance.

The third one is nirvāna. Nirvāna—what is nirvāna? Nirvāna is realm of free from suffering, you know. When we understand the "things as it is," like I explained—when we understand the teaching of interdependency then we are in nirvāna—in realm of nirvāna.

The fourth one is the means for attainment of nirvāna—how to attain nirvāna. And how to attain nirvāna is the practice of *hasshōdō*, or Eightfold Noble Path. And Buddha exp- [partial word]—this⁶ is the, you know, the first teaching which was told by Buddha when—after he attained enlightenment. How we suffer, why we suffer, and cause of suffering. He points out the cause of suffering. The cause of suffering is ignorance, illusion. And he pointed out if the cause of suffering is the illusion or ignorance, to be free from ignorance, or to get rid of ignorance, or to have wisdom is the way to attain enlightenment. The cause of suffering is directly related to the result of suffering—suffering which is resulted by the cause which is ignorance. So, you know, cause of suffering is here, and the end of the suffering, the result of ignorance is suffering.

⁶ The *Kegon Sūtra*.

So to—there is, you know, immutable truth between the cause of suffering and suffering. And this is the teaching of cause and effect. And you cannot, you know, get out of the cause—course of cause and effect.

So to—only way to be free from suffering is to transmute the ignorance to—into wisdom. That is the only way. Or to replace ignorance for the wisdom. And the relationship [between?] wisdom and ignorance is the same, you know. The—it is two side of the one coin. And suffering and the relationship between suffering and nirvāna is also two side of the one paper. It is actually one, but because of our ignorance we cannot see, you know, the other side of the wood [?],⁷ like we can see the water but we do not actually understand what is water, like Dogen-zenji point out—pointed out.

Now how to—the practice how to attain nirvāna. The one is to have—this is, you know—what I am talking about for—in three lectures are—four lectures are not Zen—teaching of Zen, but in its wider sense it is teaching of Zen, but in its narrow sense this—those lectures are lectures about Buddhism in its wide sense. And those teaching are called teachings for *shrāvakas*,⁸ or Hinayāna Buddhist, or Theravāda Buddhist. But it is true for every Buddhist—Buddhist.

And Four No- [partial word]—Eightfold Noble Path—Paths are: One is correct view. The second is correct thinking. The third is correct speech. Correct action. Correct livelihood. Correct endeavor. And correct memory. And correct meditation. Those are Eightfold Noble Truth—Noble Path. Here it says "correct," but there is no other word for this. So in Chinese or in Japanese we use "right": right thinking, or right speech, or right thinking, right view, right thinking, right speech, right activity, right livelihood. In this way, we say—we use "right." But this "right" is not the "right" in term of good and—right and wrong. This is more than that.

Anyway, we cannot say—we cannot explain it in one word. So "right," here, it means to have good understanding or, if possible, perfect understanding of the four teaching of: everything changes—everything—teaching of everything changes; teaching of selflessness; teaching of suffering—teaching of everything in state of suffering; and how—teaching of nirvāna.

To have correct understanding of it is right understanding. As you have—as you underst- [partial word]—you—as you have understood

⁷ If "wood" is correct, Suzuki-rōshi may be referring to *tamban-kan*, carrying a board on one's shoulder in such a way that one cannot see the other side.

⁸ *shrāvaka* (San.): literally, "hearer": originally, one of Shākyamuni Buddha's students or students in general.

what is water, actual, you know. When you reach this kind of understanding, that is right thinking, right view, right viewpoint. Not partial, you know, one-sided view, but correct view or right view. And right way of thinking. Just—it is not just thinking, but it is wisdom itself. And if you think accordingly, that is right thinking and right speech. Right speech does not mean to, you know, to speak—to give a speech in term of right or wrong, good or bad. Right action. The right action should not be one-sided action. We should speak impartially always. And the fourth one is right livelihood—livelihood. It want some explanation. And this is—it gives us very good suggestion what is right livelihood. Of course, this is for monks.

What is, then, wrong livelihood? To cultivate the land or to cultivate land for a monk is not right livelihood. But in China, you know—this is like a kind of precepts for Indian monks. There are the people who enter religious life after finishing their family life. And they are supposed to be supported by people—not only his family but also people in the town—in his the town.

So after they entered religious life, they are not supposed to cultivate land or cut the wood for fire. Or they should not [practice] compounding. They should not compound medicine, even. And they should not study astrology. [Laughs, laughter.] They should not speaking by proxy for another. You should not be attorney [laughs]. You should—you should not practice charms, you know, some magic. And you should not be fortune-teller. You should [laughs] tell fortune for others or [1-2 words]. You know ... *[Sentence not finished. Tape turned over.]*

... is—what will be a monk—what kind of person, you know—what kind of personality is for monk, or ideal image of monks. They should not tell something, you know—they should not pray some magical power, you know. They should not fascinate people by some, you know, by some extraordinary [extraordinary] way [laughs]. Only his own personality, only his own everyday life, he should be a monk. Do you understand? They should not take some particular—they should not take some different activity. They should be plain, common, ordinal [ordinary] people, and they should be a good friend of others. And sometime they should be even a teacher of others, without having this kind of charm. This is how the monk should be—how Buddhist should be.

If you understand the teaching of interdependency, or if you understand what is water, actually, you will easily understand what will be the right livelihood for Buddhist. Okay? You should remember this. I don't prohibit, you know, those things, but you should know the

image of the Buddhist. What will be the Buddhist? In this way, Buddha had many disciples.

Do you know Mañjushrī? He was a very alert fellow. How he joined Buddha's order is when he saw his—Buddha's disciple early in the morning on the street, walking, you know, straight, calmly, and gently. And he was struck by his appearance. Just—when just he saw him, he was fascinated in its trueness [?], not because of some magic—magical power. And he decided to join Buddha's order.

In this way, you know, Buddha obtained many disciples. He did not play any magic. He did not say anything strange, special. The teaching he told for us is very usual teaching. It is very wide and big, but if you try to understand it, you know, it is bottomlessly big. But he did not tell us anything strange. This is right livelihood. I think this is very important, especially for you who want to be a pioneer of American Buddhism in its true sense. You should not depend on some, you know, power, or some wisdom, or some particular knowledge or study.

And right endeavor. This is also important, you know. [Laughs.] It is rather difficult to—to have right endeavor. In short, when people get up you should get up. When people eat, you should eat. That is right endeavor. You should not get up too early or too late.

And right memory. Memory—something—to remember something which is important for our practice. And the last one is right meditation. Before Buddha, people practice zazen, you know, in various way, with various aim. But Buddha's meditation is completely different from those meditations. I think there is no need to explain about this. Okay? I think you will dust [?] everything [laughs, laughter].

You cannot use, you know, what you have now. Even though you know many things, you should not tell—you should not use it, and just to sit is what you should do. Just to know what is meditation, what is water [laughs], why did you come here—that's all what you should know. And, in this way, if you continue your practice, you will be a good Buddhist in its true sense.

Oh! [Probably finds out the time. Laughs.] I thought it was too early to stop it.

Before, I use big towel [?]. [Laughs, laughter] I better [?] change over.

Source: City Center original tape. Verbatim transcript by Sara Hunsaker and Bill Redican (3/6/01).