

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
LOTUS SŪTRA, LECTURE NO. 4: CHAPTER II
[Third Lotus Sūtra Series]
Saturday Evening, October 25, 1969
Zen Mountain Center

Last night¹ I explained the most important part of this chapter [II], which runs:

"Shāriputra—"

This is another translation,² translated from Chinese text³ comparing to Sanskrit original text.

"Shāriputra, the Thus-Come One—Thus-Come One can by a variety of distinction skillfully preach the dharma. His word are gentle, gladdening many hearers. Shāriputra, to take the—to take the essential and—to take the essential and speak of it. As for the immeasurable and unlimited dharmas that have never been before, the Buddha has perfected them all."

And here—this is most important part:

"Cease, Shāriputra. We need no more speak. Why is that? As for the prime, rare, hard-to-understand dharma which the Buddha has perfected, only a buddha and buddha can exalt [exhaust?] the reality of the dharma—namely,
the suchness of dharma,
the suchness of their marks,
the suchness of their nature,
the suchness of their substance,
the suchness of their powers,

¹ This lecture is tentatively numbered Lecture 4. No tape for a lecture on October 24, 1969 (which would have been Lecture 3), is known to exist. In this present lecture, Suzuki-rōshi three times refers to a lecture or discussion of the previous night and once to October 24th, but once to his previous lecture (i.e., not necessarily the 24th). So the tape of that lecture may or may not have existed at some time, but it has not as yet been identified.

² That is, other than the one translated by H. Kern (used in SR-69-10-23), which relies on a Sanskrit source text. The translation Suzuki-rōshi uses in this and subsequent lectures is *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma* (Leon Hurvitz, trans., New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), which relies on the Kumārajīva translation as its source text. Suzuki-rōshi revised Hurvitz' translation very slightly as he read and commented upon it. (Hurvitz' translation was published five years after Suzuki-rōshi's death, so Suzuki-rōshi must have relied on a pre-publication manuscript version of the text, which itself differs slightly from the 1976 published version.)

³ Translated from Sanskrit to Chinese by Kumārajīva in 406.

the suchness of their functions,
the suchness of their causes,
the suchness of their conditions,
the suchness of their effects,
the suchness of their retribution, and
the absolute equality of their beginning and end."

And here there is important words. Reality of these dharmas—reality of these dharmas—reality of these dharma I explained last night: how things exist, and namely suchness of the dharma, and the suchness of their marks, and suchness of their nature, suchness of their substance. But all those things in word [are] another version of "things changes and things has no self-nature." And things are originally organic: one whole being, which makes one whole lives [life?]. That is the fundamental teaching of this sūtra.

And to have this kind of understanding—view of life, view of nature—is the Buddha's wisdom. And, in this chapter—in this sūtra they—Buddha put emphasis on this point. And I refer to the—and I refer to *Shōbōgenzō*:⁴ "Only dharma—only buddha and buddha can exalt [exhaust?] the reality of these dharma." "Only buddha and buddha can exalt [exhaust?] the reality of dharmas." This is very important.

In *Shōbōgenzō* there is one chapter just for this words: "only buddha."⁵ Buddha understand buddha. That is actually how we transmit Buddhism, you know: When disciple become disciple, in its true sense, disciple may have transmission. When disciple became really disciple, there is no other person but—but him. He is the only—he represent all being[s] because everything exist in—everything exist has interdependency to the rest of the being[s]. So he include—his life include everything. And teacher's everyday life include everything. Then there is no difference between teacher and disciple. When teacher and disciple understand things—dharma in this way, there is—although there is nothing to transmit, but teacher and disciple can share the same life. That is how we transmit our way.

In Japanese, *yuibutsu-yobutsu*.⁶ *Yuibutsu-yobutsu*. Ot- [partial word]—it means that "buddha with buddha"—"only buddha with only buddha." The—this is famous term—*yuibutsu-yobutsu*—famous term for Sōtō priests, especially. *Yuibutsu-yobutsu-nainōgūjin*.⁷ It is a

⁴ Possibly in *Shōbōgenzō* "Yuibutsu-yobutsu" ("Buddhas Alone, Together with Buddhas"). A similar phrase is also found in *Shōbōgenzō* "Hokke-ten-hokke."

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Yuibutsu-yobutsu*: *yui*: "only" or "solely"; + *yo*: "and" or "together with"; + *butsu*: "buddha." Hence, "Buddhas alone, together with buddhas." (Suzuki-rōshi also commented on this term in Lecture SR-70-07-13.)

⁷ "The way can be realized by a buddha alone."

kind of stock term for us. Only buddha—one buddha exalt [exhaust?] everything, you know. Always one buddha exalt [exhaust?] everything. Only buddha include everything. Only buddha—only one activity exalt [exhaust?] all the activity in the world. This is, you know, this point should be understood from various angle. Then this understanding will be extended—the extend this—the teaching of this point will be the whole sūtra.

So skillfulness or means is not second principle. All the activity which is called "skillfulness of buddha," all the dharma which was left by Buddha with skillfulness is, you know, nothing but the real teaching itself—the first principle itself. When we practice this skillfulness in its true sense, that is nothing but the—all the dharma we have as a Buddhist.

So skillfulness is not any more skillfulness. But usually when we say "skillfulness," you need some special practice. And because of this practice, you will attain some special teaching—dharma, like the first—so-called-it first principle. But for—for Zen there is no first principle. What we have is just skillful means, which we practice moment-after-moment. That is the first principle itself.

But, you know, how we attain this kind of skillfulness—not "skillfulness," but—its—it depend on how seriously we practice this. Only when you are involved in your activity, moment after moment completely, that is what we mean by "skillfulness."

And as long as you make your best—even though you make mistake, that is also skillfulness, according to this sūtra. But usually, you know, they don't understand in that way. "If you make some mistake, that is not skillfulness. That is not good skill. Until you have," you know, "—do something without any mistake, you have no dharma, or you have no first principle." That is usual understand[ing], and that is more like *shrāvakayāka*⁸ way.

You know, here in this translation there is many words "voice-hearer." Voice-hearer means, in Japanese, *shōmon*.⁹ *Shōmon* is the—actually Buddha's disciple who—who practiced Buddha's way with Buddha. And they think Buddha was great but we are not so great. This is, actually—this was mistake. So even Shāriputra, Buddha said, you haven't—he didn't actually say so, but—after long long time, this sūtra supposed to be told by Buddha the last time. This is the last sūtra for the—for his

⁸ *shrāvakayāka*: "vehicle of the hearers." Also used to indicate the Hīnayāna way.

⁹ *shōmon*: Japanese for Sanskrit *shrāvaka*, "hearer." Originally *shōmon* referred to an actual disciple of Shākyamuni Buddha. In Mahāyāna usage, it refers to a Hīnayāna practitioner who reaches the stage of an *arhat* by observing a great number of precepts.

disciple. And after they—his disciple attained no-outflow stage—*muro-ka*¹⁰—in Chinese *muro-ka*—the—the final stage, Buddha said, you know, "The teaching which I am going to tell you will not be understood by you" [laughs]. So they [were] confused, you know. "After attaining highest stage, you don't understand."

Why he said so is because they thought, "We are *arhat*. [We are] next to, maybe, Buddha. But we are not Buddha, but we are *arhat*." So that was mistake, you know. Even [when] he started Buddhism, originally he was Buddha, you know. So there is no difference between—originally there is no difference between Buddha and his disciples. This understanding was missing, so that as long as you attach to this kind of dualistic idea—who is buddha and who is not buddha, who is perfect and who is not perfect—you will not understand this teaching. Or you will not have the Buddha's view of life, or Buddha's wisdom. Or you will not have *shohō-jissō*.¹¹ You will not have "actual reality of the being," in which there is—everything is—has same value. Nothing can be separated from the other.

So this teaching is completely different [from that] which was told by Buddha in some dualistic way. That is why Buddha said, "You will not understand this teaching." Those points were the points I explained last night—in my last lecture.

At that time, the World-Honored One, wishing to restate this doctrine, spoke forth—spoke forth *gāthās*,¹² saying:

The same thing [as previous prose lines] is told by Buddha in style of *gāthā*:

"The Hero of the World is incalculable.
Among gods, worldlings—among gods, worldlings,
And all variety of living beings,
There is none who can know the buddha[s].
As to the Buddha's strength, his fearlessness,
His deliverance, and his *samadhis*, as well as
The other dharmas[s] of Buddha,
There is none who can fathom them."

I think you have to understand first in a dualistic way. Buddha's teaching is very profound—something more than he says. Because it

¹⁰ *muro-ka*: an effect free from delusion or impurity; nirvāna; enlightenment.

¹¹ *shohō-jissō*: *sho*, "all" or "many"; + *hō*, physical and mental dharmas; + *jitsu*, "real"; + *sō*, "form." Hence, "All dharmas are real form."

¹² *gāthā* (San.): literally, "singly raising a chant." In a sūtra, *gāthās* are stanzas of poetry that are independent of the preceding lines of prose; an independent verse.

is—it include our actual life which we have—we have had, and which we have, and which we will have, moment after—moment after moment in various meanings. So no one can—there is no one who can fathom it—fathom them. This is very important point.

"Formerly, following numberless buddhas,
He fully trod the various paths,
Those dharma are very profound and subtle,
Hard to see and hard to understand."

Formerly, not only in this life but also his former life, in various way, following numberless buddhas, he fully trod the various paths. It is actually so. It is not just, you know, story, because his life include everyone's life. And when Buddha is Buddha, no—there is no other buddha, and there is no other disciple. There is none who can fathom them, like eyes cannot see eyes.

"Formerly, following numberless buddhas,
He fully trod the various paths,
These dharmas, very profound and subtle,
Hard to see and hard to understand.
Throughout countless millions of *kalpas*—"

Having trodden those various paths on the ground of the way—or here there is some correction:¹³ "On the," maybe, "platform of the path."

"On the platform of the path, he was able to achieve the fruit:
This is—I fully know."

Here is some—some words to explain.

"Throughout countless millions of *kalpas*
Having trodden those various paths;
On the platform of the path—"

This is, you know—or, "ground of the way." Translated in this way. And in Sanskrit, *bodhi-maḍḍā*—or some people say *bodhi-maḍḍāla*. Or maybe *bodhi-maḍḍā* is more—is correct. It means the place—in India, you know, or—when—in this sūtra it means where Buddha attain—place where the Buddha attained enlightenment. And this is also important point in various sūtra. In *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* we have this words in some different meaning—connotation. Here it means the place he—Buddha attained enlightenment. Hmm. In its narrow sense, you know—or original meaning of *bodhi-maḍḍā* means—*maḍḍā* means the—some holy place. *Bodhi-maḍḍā* means place—holy place where

¹³ Probably in the Hurvitz manuscript.

*bodhi*¹⁴ was achieved. So where Buddha attained enlightenment, like Bodhi—under Bodhi tree, that is *bodhi-maōóala*.

And when people understand or people say this is—the translation of holy *maōóala* means—*maōóala* is—you know, when you make—I don't know how you make cheese out of milk, you know. At first you will take out the essence of the milk, getting rid of water. And you may—you will make a cheese out of it. And in surface of—if you see the surface of the cheese, you will have some picture like *maōóala* which you cannot tell what—exactly what it is like, you know, Buddhist *maōóala*. That is *maōóala*, which is very essential of something—essence of something, and which is very pure, and which is very beautiful. That is *maōóala*. So *bodhi-maōóala* is *maōóala* of pure teaching, where Buddha may practice his way.

And later, in its wide sense, wherever it is, if we practice our way, that is holy place. In Japanese or Chinese [it is] translated like *dōjō*—"practice hall." And later, in China, there were—there—they built many *dōjō* for some special practice, like zazen—zendō, you know. Zendō is special building to practice our way, or *dōjō* for chanting Amida Buddha's name. That kind of special building was built in China by various people, or various supporters of the sect.

But here it means "the place he attained enlightenment." On the path—on the—so, you can say, on—

"Under the Bodhi tree, he was able to achieve the fruit:
This I fully knows."

So, you know, so according to the—according to Dōgen-zenji, you know, where we practice zazen, that is *dōjō*, and that is the *bodhi-maōóala*. Not only under—so everywhere will be *bodhi-maōóala* if someone practice zazen there. That is actually what Dōgen-zenji meant.

"As to such great fruits and retribution as these,
Such varied doctrines of nature and marks,
I and the buddha of the ten directions
Are the only ones who can know these things.
These dharmas cannot be demonstrated;
Signs of words are quiescent in—in them.

[Repeats.]

Sign of words are quiescent in them.
Among the remaining kinds of living beings

¹⁴ *bodhi* (San.): truth; state of truth.

There are none who can understand them—"

It is impossible to understand fully because it is something beyond signs of words. And yet, you know, wherever we are, there is way, there is dharma. That is actual renunciation, because we cannot stick to human nature or buddha-nature. Human nature—if you say "human nature," no, that is buddha-nature. If you say "buddha-nature," no, that is human nature. You shouldn't be discouraged, you know, by your human nature. You shouldn't be attached to buddha-nature. That is renunciation from buddha-nature and human nature.

If—if un- [partial word]—if you understand, and if you practice our way in that way, there is the Buddha's teaching in its true sense, which is beyond signs of words.

"Signs of words are quiescent in them."

This is, I think, good words. I didn't, you know, I didn't know. This is also famous words.

[Suzuki-rōshi whispers to himself in Japanese.] *Jaku metsu*.¹⁵

[Laughs.] In Japan, when we have funeral service—funeral procession, we have four banners. In one of them it says, "Death"—or "Death and extinction." "With death and extinction, we enjoy"—or, "We enjoy death and extinction." So [laughs] some people may think Buddhists like death and extinction. They [may say]: "Buddhism is very—very, very negative," you know. "Buddhist has very negative attitude." But *jaku* is "calmness," and *metsu* is "extinction." The calmness as dead person. And extinction of all the desires, like dead person. And we enjoy this.

But it—it does not mean to annihilate all our desires, you know. It means to go beyond those desires, or to go beyond even the extinction of all desires, or Buddha, who—or arhatship. That is real extinction of everything.

"Sign of words are quiescent—quiescent in them."

This is, I think, some words you should, you know—you should remember. And you should study thoroughly what will be the—the state of absolute calmness.

"Among the remaining kinds of remaining beings

¹⁵ Suzuki-rōshi is saying a Japanese term to himself (sounding as if he is trying to translate it). He customarily had dictionaries and other reference materials close at hand when giving lectures on the *Lotus Sūtra*, so he probably had a Japanese version of the text.

There are none who can understand them,
Except for multitude of bodhisattvas
Whose power of faith is firm.

[Repeats.]

Except for multitude of bodhisattvas
Whose power of faith is firm."

"Except [for] bodhisattvas," you know, because this is, maybe because of this is the sūtra for Mahāyāna Buddhist, or this teaching is for bodhisattvas, you know. This is actually express bodhisattva's mind or Mahāyāna spirit. So Mahāyāna students may understand it, it says. There is some, you know—some discrimination: Mahāyāna or Hīnayāna. But this is the sūtra which was set up by Mahāyāna Buddhist. I don't know who did it, but it can't be helped to have some discrimination.

So Dōgen, you know, make this kind of understanding one step further, where there is no Mahāyāna or Hīnayāna teaching.

"Except for the multitude of bodhisattvas
Whose power of faith is firm."

So bodhisattva's, you know, way is to have strong faith in our buddha-nature. By the way, I was very much interested in the discussion we have last four days—[October] 24th. Dōgen-zenji, you know, talks—talked about that kind of things in *Shōbōgenzō*, so I, you know—I felt as if we have many Dōgen-zenji here [laughs] talking about same thing.

"The multitude of Buddha's disciple
Formerly made offering to the buddhas.
All their outflow now exhausted,
They inhabit this last body.
Such men as these,
Their strength—their strength irresistible—inresistible—

[Repeats.]

The multitude of the Buddha's disciple
Formerly made effort [offering] to the buddha.
All their outflow now exhausted,
They inhabit this last body.
Such men as these,
Their strength—their strength irresistible—"

This is, you know, actually this part [is] talking about *shrāvakas*—

Buddha's disciples who attained arhatship, or *pratyekabuddhas*, which is called Hīnayāna Buddhist. "The multitude of the Buddha's disciple"—"Buddha's disciple" sometime—"Buddha's disciple" in this sūtra means sometime *shrāvakas*, and sometime—sometime include *pratyeka* too, and sometime means Buddha's disciple who were intimately served him, or some—sometime Buddha's disciple when—in this sūtra when they say "Buddha's disciple," he may be a priest, in contrast with layman. So *shrāvaka* or *bhikshu*¹⁶ ... [Sentence not finished. Tape turned over.] ... or some "hearer" sometime, in general. So I don't know exactly who they are when they say here "Buddha's disciple." If I check Sanskrit words, maybe I can tell.

"The multitude of the Buddha's disciple—"

Maybe Buddha's—"hearer of the Buddha's teaching," especially *shrāvakas* and *pratyeka*—*shrāvakas* and *pratyeka*.

"Formerly made offering to the buddhas.
All their outflow now exhausted—"

This is actually *arhat*, who has no evil desires.

"They inhabit this last body."

So those who have fruit of practice—

"Such men as these,
Their strength is irresistible—"

Although, you know, their strength is wonderful—irresistible, even so, they will not understand it as long as they have dualistic idea, or as long as they try to attain something.

"Even if they filled the world,
If all were like Shāriputra—"

Shāriputra is now the—now representing all, you know, disciple who have—who had dualistic understanding—

"If all were like Shāriputra—
And if, exhausting their thoughts, all together calculated,
Could not fathom the Buddha's knowledge."

The Buddha's knowledge, in its true sense, is not knowledge who can understand in term of words or sign.

"Even if they filled the ten directions,

¹⁶ *bhikshu*: monk; beggar; fully ordained member of a *sangha*.

All of them like Shāriputra
And the remaining disciples,
If, further, filling the *kūetras* of ten directions—"

Kūetras means "area" or "country."¹⁷

"—filling the *kūetras* of ten directions
And exhausting their thoughts, they were to calculate together—
they were to calculate together,
They still could not know it.
If *pratyekabuddhas* of sharp intelligence,
Inhabiting a final body without outflows,
Are to fill even—were to fill even the zephyrs [spheres?] of the
ten directions,
In their number like to bamboo groves,
And if, putting their minds together
For millions of incalculable *kalpas*,
They wish to think on the real knowledge of the Buddha,
They [there] would be none who could know the slight—
slight portion of—thereof."

"Inhabiting final body without outflows"—this is actually means *arhat*.
"Without outflows"—"outflows" means, you know—this is a kind of
special term—who have no desires—who have no—who keep precepts
perfectly—who keeps perfect precepts without—without outflows.
They are not like basket [laughs], you know, or they are not old
container which has many—which leaks a lot [laughs]. That is actually
what it means.

And next part:

"If bodhisattva who were recently launched their thoughts
towards—"

Excuse me.

"If bodhisattva who have recently launched their thoughts
Who have made offering to—who have made offering to
countless buddhas,
Who understand fully the direction of the various doctrines,
And who also can well preach the dharma—who also can
well preach the dharma,
Were, in the manner of ears of hems, bamboo, and rice,
To fill the *kūetras* of the ten directions,
And if, with one mind and by resort to their suitable wisdom—
subtle wisdom,

¹⁷ *kūetras* (San.): literally, "field"; buddha-field.

For *kalpas* as numerous as Ganges sand,
They were all to think and calculate together,
They still could not understand the Buddha's knowledge."

Same thing as I read it [already].

"If bodhisattvas who do not backslide—"

"Backslide" is, you know—it means that if you really, you know, experience something in its true sense, if that experience is very natural, and very accurate, and outcome of the—your buddha-nature, that experience will never die. It is part of Buddha's—Buddha's himself's life.

And this is very true. For an instance, you know, you may—you don't know actually why you came to Tassajara, maybe. Maybe some of you think, "I—for this reason I came to Tassajara. For this reason I am practicing here," you may say. But, you know, things does not happen as you expect [laughs]—as you think, you know, as you expected. As I said, even though, you know, you have full under-[partial word]—explanation of the enlightenment experience, the experience—enlightenment [laughs] experience you have will not be the same as you thought before you attain enlightenment. But actually, the reason why is actually it is not you who [laughs], you know—originally it was not you who was practicing zazen. Who was practicing to zazen, according to Dōgen? Buddha was practicing zazen, not you.

So accordingly, what you will have as a result will not be the same thing as your small mind expected. If something like that happen, as a result of pure practice, as a result of real practice, that result will not vanish at all because that is so—Dōgen-zenji said, "Wisdom seek for wisdom." Buddha, you know—because of Buddha, Buddha will appear. So Buddha, you know, result [in] Buddha. Same Buddha will be resulted.

So, "Wisdom seek for wisdom." That kind of wisdom is wisdom who—who—which has no slide-back. Some attainment you attained with some intention, you know, will slide back when your intention is not so strong any more. That is a kind of dualistic attainment you attain by your small mind.

So the point is when you practice real practice, you should give up all the selfish idea. You should just practice zazen for sake of zazen. You should be completely involved in, in other word, practice—whatever practice it may be. That is the point, and that is the practice—the attainment. No slide-back. This is important—*futaiten*¹⁸—important

¹⁸ *futaiten* (Jap.): not to regress from a realm one has attained.

words—words.

"If bodhisattvas who do not backslide,
In number like to Ganges sands,
Were with one mind—were with one mind to think and seek
together,
They still could not know it.
I further proclaim to you, Shāriputra,
That that which is without outflows—that which is without
outflows, beyond reckoning and discussion,
The extremely profound and subtle dharma,
I have already got completely.
Only I know its mark,
As do the buddha—buddhas of the ten directions."

He says:

"As to the—as—"

Excuse me.

"As do the buddha of ten directions.

Only I know its marks, its feature, its, you know, its way—how exist.

Excuse me, I must repeat it:

"I further proclaim to you, Shāriputra,
That that which is without outflow, beyond reckoning and
discussion,
The extremely profound and subtle dharma,
I have already got completely.
Only I know its marks—only I know its marks,
As do the buddhas of the ten directions."

Sometime he says "only I," but sometime he says "the buddhas of the ten directions," or sometime he refers to Buddha in future, like Maitreya Buddha. But when we say "Maitreya Buddha," there is no other Buddha. When we say "Shākyamuni Buddha," there is no other Buddha than Shākyamuni Buddha. When you say, "I am Buddha," there is no other Buddha. That is our understanding. Each buddha include the rest of the buddha. So [it seems that] there may be many Buddhas at the same time, [but] actually there is one Buddha in reality, you know.

So one and many: We have one buddha and many buddhas. There is no contradiction when we understand in this way. Did you understand

[laughs]? There is no contradiction. Many would—yes, many would [say], "One Buddha, yes, only one Buddha." Two buddhas? "Yes, two buddhas. Three buddhas, yes." [Laughs.] There is no contradiction. This is, you know, how we understand Buddha.

So this kind of understanding comes out of our real practice. So he [says]:

"As do the buddhas of the ten direction."

And now there are many buddhas who understand this sūtra.

"Shāriputra, it is to be known
That the Buddha—Buddha's words are without
discrepancy—discrepancy—"

Buddha's words—no discrepancy, you know. Buddha's words is always one, you know. There is no discrepancy. There is no gap to insert some personal opinion.

"That towards the dharma preached by the Buddha
One should evince the strength of great faith."

This is maybe a kind of faith, but the faith which is more—most realistic and most mystical [laughs] and most realistic, most profound and most common.

"After the World-Honored One's dharma has subsisted long—"

Here, you know, it—it makes strong and wise sense.

"After the World-Honored One's dharma has subsisted long,
He must preach the truth."

I don't know who he is, you know. He must preach the truth because there are many dharmas, many buddhas. He must preach the truth.

"I proclaim to the multitude of voice-hearers—"

This is *shrāvakas*.

"And to those who seek the vehicle of conditioned
perceivers—"

This is *pratyekabuddhas*.

"That I am the one who shall cause they cast off—"

Ah, excuse me.

"That I am the one who shall cause them to cast off the bonds
of suffering
And to stain—to attain nirvāna.

[Repeats.]

I proclaim [...]
That I am the one who shall cause them to cast off the bonds of
suffering
And to attain nirvāna.
The Buddha, by the power of expedient devices,
Demonstrates the teaching of three vehicles."

"Three vehicles" means bodhisattva vehicle, and *shrāvaka's* vehicle,
and *pratyeka* vehicle. *Pratyeka* is the second, and bodhisattva vehicle
is the first, and *shrāvaka's*—*shrāvaka's* vehicle is the third.

"Demonstrates the teaching of the three vehicles.
The living beings who are attached to this object and that—"

"To this object or the other," maybe.

"Living beings who are attached to this object and that,
He attracted, thus enabling them to extract themselves."

Ah. Excuse me.

"—enabling them to extricate themselves."

This is the end of the—the stanza form of precedent part of the sūtra.

Oh. Do you have some questions?

Through this kind of Mahāyāna teaching, Zen, you know, practice
resulted. I think we have to know this kind of sophisticated explain-
[partial word]—expressing of the teaching. The opposite way is Zen
[laughs]:

"What is Buddha?" [Laughs.] "Cats and snake." [Laughs.]

"What is Buddha?" "A beautiful stone by the stream [laughs],
like this," you know.

That is Zen way. But underlying spirit is not so—it is beautiful, you
know, and the Buddhism is so simple it can be just one word. *Hai*.

Student A: Is the *Lotus Sūtra* a Mahāyāna text?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yes. The, you know, the—

Student A: It paints a picture of—of Buddha as kind of a superman, and a kind of a state which is pretty unattainable. And in my past experience, that was a Hīnayāna kind of an approach.

Suzuki-rōshi: No.

Student A: And I wonder how. Could you explain that for me?

Suzuki-rōshi: Oh, I explained it in last training period about that: the history of, you know, how historical—idea of historical Buddha developed into Mahāyāna Buddha, like Nirmānakāya, Sambhogakāya, and Dharmakāya Buddha. Like Christianity, you know, Buddhism extended, you know—idea of Buddha extended.

You may think it is—it is not so realistic, you know—Mahāyāna Buddhism is not so realistic. But it is more realistic than [laughs]—than Hīnayāna, Theravāda Buddhism.

At first, you know, Buddhism—Buddha just helped his disciples and people, you know. The teaching may be teaching of Buddha or teaching for disciples. But in Mahāyāna Buddhism it includes understanding of Buddha, and also the understanding of disciples' nature, which is called buddha-nature and which is actually one, not different.

So scale is more greater, and understanding is more deeper. Of course, Buddha himself [gave] that kind of teaching, you know. But for his disciple, you know, Buddha is someone who helped him, that's all, you know. So for Mahāyāna teaching, Buddha is something beyond historical Buddha, which contains truth within himself—not just historical [partial word]—human being—not—not just a hero or a special kind of hero. More innate nature of him, or more fundamental, general human nature was found in him. That was development of the Buddhist thought from Hīnayāna to Mahāyāna. *Hai.*

Student B: Rōshi, did the Theravādans use the name—they use the term Hīnayāna, or is that a Mahāyāna—?

Suzuki-rōshi: No, I don't think so. Theravāda: Jōza-bu.¹⁹ It means a group of priests who un- [partial word]—who knows—who remembers Buddha's words, and later, you know, who make—made some system to the words so that they can remember—easily remember it: putting number to the teaching, or, you know,

¹⁹ Jōza-bu (Jap.): One of the schools of Hīnayāna Buddhism.

correcting same kind of words in one place—classifying his teaching, you know. And that is what he—they did later.

So the Buddha's actual teaching silted down, you know, [to the] bottom of the [laughs] container, and they attach to the silt of the [laughs] drinking. And they called—this is, you know—it is easily to understand, easily to study because it is—it was organized in some particular way so that we can remember it easily—so that we can understand it easily in term of dualistic, you know, sense. But it is, at the same time, to kill the life of, you know, actual teaching.

So Buddhist became more and more, you know, rigid and confined in some, you know, container. He—"This is Buddhism." That was not so healthy development of the teaching. So Mahāyāna Buddhist, you know, started to—to get the teaching out of the container and make it flow all over. And this is—they started stirring up the water. "This is the teaching [laughs]—true teaching. And you have study this." That is more Mahāyāna teaching. *Hai*.

Student C: Skillful means—if nobody understands something such as [suchness?] Mahāyāna, and distinction between Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna—is skillful means that nobody can understand it?

Suzuki-rōshi: Skillfulness actually means—may mean, you know—usually may mean something [as a] means to point out something—something—some first principle or to give guidance to—to go to the goal, you know. That is skillfulness. And according to Mahāyāna idea, the sele- [partial word]—the teaching Buddha gave to his disciple is means, you know, for some special person, not truth itself. It is so, but it is so—when some hasty person who understand Mahāyāna, you know, [may say]: "Mahāyāna is something more than," you know, "more advanced teaching than Hīnayāna teaching because Hīnayāna teaching is just skillful means of—skillful, but means of to guide his disciple to the goal," you know. "Skillful means. Skillful. But it is just means of to give guidance to—to the goal. It is like a finger to point out the moon." In this way, you know, hasty Mahāyāna Buddhist may understand. And when they say Hīnayāna, you know, "Small Vehicle," actually most, maybe, most people understood in that way in comparison to Hīnayāna—in comparison to Mahāyāna. But, you know, more advanced understanding of it is skillful means itself is the First Principle.

So we have to accept Hīnayāna teaching with Mahāyāna spirit. That is more advanced understanding.

Student D: Are all means skillful [2-4 words unclear].

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah, if you understand more completely, you know, it

can be—the teaching can be extended to that point when Zen is for everyone, you know—the wise or the foolish, you know. For everyone. If it is religion—if it is the perfect teaching it should be for everyone. So skillful—we cannot understand the skillful means as a secondary, you know, means to—to the first principle. That is, you know, shallow or hasty understanding of Mahāyāna teaching. It may [have] started in that way, but we should have more deep understanding of Buddha's teaching. Okay?

Yeah—I have—it's too late, so—

Source: City Center original tape. Verbatim transcript by Bill Redican (7/05/01).