

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
LOTUS SŪTRA, LECTURE NO. 7: CHAPTER II
[Third Lotus Sūtra Series]
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Zen Mountain Center

In this sūtra in Chapter II, "Skillful Means," he—he is correcting our misunderstanding about the vehicle of *shrāvakas* and vehicle of *pratyekas*. You know, why we call *pratyeka* vehicle or *shrāvaka's* vehicle "Small Vehicle" is because their understanding is not right. When you understand those teaching is the—just skillful means of Buddha, to suggest the only one Great Vehicle, which is the perfect teaching—so-called-it perfect teaching or teaching which Buddha had in his own mind before he, you know, explain it, that is the teaching which is complete. And this is—development of the Buddhist thought is always concentrated on this point: how to get approach to the perfect teaching. The Mahāyāna Buddhist tried to treat the Buddha's teaching which was told by him already, so that we can understand what he meant actually. But as Zen student says, all those teaching are the finger to point at the moon. And what will be the perfect teaching was the problem which we have had since Buddha.

May be better to explain it more complete way. Although it is difficult to explain it, so accordingly for you it may be difficult to [laughs] understand what I say. But—not only teaching but also this is the understanding of life and understanding of reality. When you think there is something—in this chapter from Page 25¹ is referring to this point. When, you know, they think this is the final teaching, or when they think, "I understood completely what Buddha said," or when they think they attained final stage, which is for *arhat*—the arharship, then that is not final stage because—just because he thinks this is final stage. If he doesn't think in that way, and if he [is] continuously striving for the final stage, he—he is said to be a good disciple of Buddha. But when he said—when he say, "I attained arharship," or when they think this is the complete teaching, you know—when you listen to four noble truths or eight holy paths, then that is already mistake.

And this is also true with Mahāyāna Buddhist. Mahāyāna Buddhist thinks, you know, the—all the teaching is, in one word, emptiness. A teaching of emptiness is the true teaching. But if you think in that way, that is also wrong. Then what is the real teaching is—real teaching is teaching which could be, you know, verbal teaching, and which could be teaching of emptiness, and which is not just verbal teaching, and which is not just teaching of emptiness. That is real teaching [laughs]. You know, I—you—you already studied, "Form is

¹ Page 25 of the handout, not the final 1976 edition.

emptiness, and emptiness is form, and form is form, and emptiness is emptiness." That is real teaching.

Here is a book, you know, and this is verbal teaching, and this is, you know, this side is teaching of emptiness. So if you think teaching of emptiness is teaching of this side is wrong, and teaching of this side is right, then both is not perfect teaching, you know. Both people, you know, just stick to one-sided view: emptiness and form.

Real emptiness or middle way is not here. The middle way is observing, you know, this one—this side and this side from quite different level. The middle way is right here. And they—from—those who understand middle way—this—if this side—this viewpoint is wrong, this point is also wrong. And if this side is right, the other side—this side should be right. Real teaching of emptiness is not on this level. It is—it may be like this, you know. All those side is the teaching of—verbal teaching. And when we say "emptiness," it is like this, you know. So you—this kind of teaching cannot be compare with the teaching which is standing—completely different teaching. So if you, you know, extend your usual understanding without giving up thinking mind, you cannot, you know, understand the teaching of emptiness in its true sense.

The teaching of emptiness is the teaching which could be understand when you give up thinking mind. And when you actually start to practice our way. And as long as you are going on, practice after practice, then you will understand real teaching of emptiness. This is the point—this sūtra put emphasis on it.

So if you—if we start this kind of practice, you will be, you know—you will [be] sure to be a buddha. That is so-called-it *juki*,² you know. In this sūtra you will be a buddha at certain time, at certain place, and at that time you—your name will be so-and-so, you know. It means that. But if you—only when you continue your practice—that is a condition—important condition, you know, to be—to understand what is real teaching.

The other day, someone asked me—some difficult term like "five pollution." I don't remember what this translation says "five—

Student: Defilements.

Suzuki-rōshi: Defilements. Defilements? And they—defilement—this is—may not be so important, but it is interesting to know what is five defilements [laughs, laughter].³

² *juki* (Jap.): being told by the Buddha that one will attain enlightenment.

³ Traditionally, the five *gojoku* are:

(1) *kalpa-kauàya* (*kōjoku*)—a period of war, natural disasters, and

You know, first—first one—what—which is first one? You know, order is sometime different. Starting from *kalpa—kalpa*—not "defilement"—"pollution" is more adequate word: *gojoku*, we say *gojoku akusei*.⁴ You know—*akusei*—"bad world," where there is five pollution or polluted—like polluted air, you know, in city [laughs].

First one is *kalpa* pollution. According to the [laughs] time *kalpa* people live, there is difference—big difference in the degree of pollution. When our human world is very pure, we had very long life. Eight million years of life—each one of us could survive eight—eight million years. That—because there was—the air was not so [laughs, laughter]—so bad. But now, you know, in our days we can live just—at most 100 years. And in this way, air pollution will become [laughs, laughter] worse and worse, and if we will, you know, survive in very bad year, it will continuously, you know—pollution will be heavier and heavier until we can live in it just three years [laughs, laughter]. All of us will die out at the age of three or two or one [laughs]. This kind of idea they had.

So this is—maybe—defilements is more advanced, you know, interpretation of it. In China they—the five—instead of saying five pollution, they said two defilement. That—that is more subjective interpret- [partial word]—or more psychological interpretation—version of it. The one is defilements caused by wrong thinking, wrong understanding, wrong viewpoint. The other is more emotional defilements.

But originally it is more interesting, you know. They had more interesting understanding or version of it. The f- [partial word]—"and those pollution of air is created by human being because of passion and evil desires." Because human being has so many and so strong passion and evil desires, the air will be polluted more and more. And this is divided in two: one is more sociological, you know, version of pollution, like when—when people doesn't know their father and mother, you know, not much—doesn't know not much about father's life or mother's life. Or who is priest or who is Brahman, or no sense of seniority. Then that will, at that time, you know, the air will be polluted more.

And no idea of obligation, or no justice, or no duty. And they—when

pestilence;

(2) *dçùti-kaiàya (kenjoku)*—a period of heresies;

(3) *klesha-kaiàya (bonnō-joku)*—a period of strong passions;

(4) *sattva-kaiàya (shujō-joku)*—a period in which people are physically and mentally weak; and

(5) *àyui-kaiàya (myō-joku)*—a period in which lifespans are brief.

⁴ Phonetic guess only. Spelling is not verified.

people does not behave. And when people does not afraid of the result of bad conduct. When people has no wisdom to see things as it is. And when people has not much virtue. And when people do not observe precepts so much, like eight precepts: no taking like, no steal, no sex, no deceive, no intoxicant materials, no perfume [laughs, laughter], no dancing, no theater [laughs], no television, maybe [laughs, laughter]. No [laughs, laughter] [1 word] don't chair or bed. No eat after noon [laughs, laughter]. If people doesn't observe—do not observe those, you know, pure precepts, then air will be polluted [laughs].

And then we will have—this is more, you know, subjective—this—those [above] are more sociological version of it.

And *bonnō-joku*—you know, pollution by our passion. This is—if we have strong evil desires or passion. And if we have—if we like to keep sword or weapon, you know—if we involved in juridical case or fight, in this way the—our air would be polluted.

And we count already *kalpa* pollution, and sentient beings pollution, and pollution by evil passions. One two three. The fourth one is to have various, you know, erroneous view of life and society like capitalism or communism [laughs]. Those are the cause of—those imperfect view of life will cause pollution. In one word, various heretical teaching. We count 62 heresy—heretical understanding of life. I—it is rather—may be interesting, but so complicated. Sixty-two. Those are pollution by our understanding of life—wrong view of life.

And those things will result because of those pollution, you know, we—our life will not be so long. So this is so-called-it pollution—short life caused by pollution. Those are five pollutions.

The more Mahāyāna way of understanding of those pollution is when we come to the *kalpa* where there is many bad things appear—bad events take place, that is *kalpa* pollution. And pollution by sentient beings or people when we have not much good people, that is pollution by human being. And when we have become greedy or when we have anger, greed, and ignorance, and other passions, that—and because of this we cannot follow the right path, then that is called pollution by passion.

And when we cannot understand the Buddha's teaching because of wrong view of life, that us pollution by view of life. And when we had more than eight million years of life, there was no Buddha's teaching, or Buddha's teaching was not necessary. But when our age come to six million years, Kuruson—Kuruson Buddha—Kuruson Buddha⁵

⁵ Kuruson Buddha (San. Krakucchanda-buddha): the fourth of the six

appeared and started Buddha's teaching. And when Shākyamuni Buddha appeared, some people could live one hundred and twenty. But our teaching will be end—ended when we live just three years old. That is, you know, the commentary to the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*.

So it is interesting to, you know, to see the commentary of the scriptures. Then you will see the—how Buddha's—understanding of Buddha's teaching developed. Actually, this *Lotus Sūtra* is good example of good material to know how Buddha's teaching—understanding of Buddha's teaching developed and become deeper and deeper.

I think if you have a question, please ask me. I want to—it may be better to have question-and-answer time. *Hai*.

Student A: Where Kern translates "supreme perfect enlightenment, or knowledge of the all-knowing," Hurvitz, I think, translates "knowledge of all modes."

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student A: Could you explain that difference—or what it—what it means, "knowledge of all modes"?

Suzuki-rōshi: Knowledge of all modes. If—if I explain it literally, it is very, you know, difficult. So may be better to explain it more, you know, referring to our practice, you know. The supreme perfect, you know, teaching—we say so as if there is some teaching, you know, which is—which you can understand, or as if there is some stage where you can understand everything, you know. But actually it is not so. What it means—what it means is back-and-forth, you know, we are discussing about what is the perfect knowledge, or what is buddha-knowledge. Although, you know, we don't know what it is, there is some way, you know, to have best use of it [laughs], you know. Although we don't know what it is, but we can have a taste of it [laughs]. "What is it?" "Oh, this very sweet." [Laughs.] "This is very good something. I don't know what it is, and this taste is always same." Although it is always same, but we have always different feeling from it. We have always, you know, different taste from it. You know, someone may say, "Let me try. Oh, this is good." [Laughs.] "What kind of taste did you taste? Anyway, it was very good. Anyway, I like it very much. What kind of experience did you have?" And, you know, each one of us will explain what kind of taste it was. Looks like different, and looks like same, and it—it—it is always encouraging taste and very refreshing. Always fresh.

By practice, you know, we can—when we give up all the preconceived buddhas before Shākyamuni.

idea, or when we do not rely on any particular reaching, and when we become just like a child, and when our mind is very soft and flexible, we will have that kind of taste from—through our everyday life. That is something which are al- [partial word]—which we are always talking about. *Hai*.

Student B [Bill Shurtleff]: When Buddha began to try and show his students—

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Bill: —what he understood—

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Bill: —he didn't teach them the *Lotus Sūtra* to begin with, but rather some other sūtras that we call Hīnayāna sūtras.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Bill: Why is it that—that we, very much like those first students of his, begin our practice studying a sūtra that he felt they could only hear after they'd been practicing for some 30 years?

Suzuki-rōshi: Why we prac- [partial word]—study some teaching which was told?

Bill: Buddha waited some 30 years before teaching the *Lotus Sūtra*. He felt that his students had to understand other things before they would be capable of understanding the *Lotus Sūtra*.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm. Mm-mm.

Bill: And yet we begin, as very young students, with the *Lotus Sūtra*.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

Bill: Why is it that we don't begin in the same way that Buddha's students did?

Suzuki-rōshi: There is, you know—you understand in that way. Actually, this sūtra was told by Buddha, you know, thirty years after [he started teaching]. But, you know, it is not so, actually. This sūtra was told by—no one knows who told this sūtra. But historically, you know, it was obviously—this sūtra was told 100 BC or 150 BC, not by direct—even by direct disciple, but by Buddhist, you know, who thought out Buddha's teaching. By experience, various religious, you know, things—rituals and—by reading or practicing something—zazen,

or practicing rituals, and came to this point. So for—for—for us, you know, who are actually practicing zazen, there will not be no need to read this kind of scripture. But, you know, if you think zazen practice is the only way to have Buddha's—to have the same experience as Buddha had, that is also not perfect. That is not right.

To understand what is zazen, we must, you know, understand those things. If zazen practice is good, those sūtras should be also good. And if we don't feel in that way, something [is] wrong with our practice. Our practice may be Hīnayāna practice, maybe [laughs]—I, you know, very primitive practice which is involved in some gaining idea or some fixed idea of practice. Whatever we do, it is—it should be our practice. Eating is practice, sleeping is practice, whatever you—we do, that is practice. And whatever we read, you know, it should be our practice, and we should know how we should read those scriptures, and we should know how to study various things besides Buddhist teaching. That is right understanding of practice—of zazen.

So, you know, if—if—if you just—your understanding of zazen practice ... [*Sentence not finished. Tape turned over.*] ... us, you know. In this way, they under- [partial word]—they understand, you know, they limited—under some limitation, they try to be something like Buddha by his teaching. But Buddha himself wanted to make everyone like—like—like him. Buddha wanted everyone to be a—various buddha. So we say, "Buddha taught us in one word, but people understand various way."

At that time, there were many—various kinds of language in India, so Buddha, you know, once try—Buddha's disciple asked him to speak in Makada⁶ language, but he didn't do so. He spoke many language, according to the people. Even so, you know, when he speak something according to the ability of the people, understanding of his teaching may be different. That is why we have more appropriately, you know—that is why we have various kinds of sūtra according to the version of one teaching of Buddha. Someone must have understood this way, someone must have understood [in a] more limited way like *shrāvakas* or *pratyeka* way.

Do you underst- [partial word]—okay? [Laughs.] This is not my under- [partial word], you know, my own explanation. According to various scholars' study, this is true historically, and accumulating various data or information and studying, you know, more scientific way, this is true. And [it is] how Buddhism developed actually. So right now—with this understanding, we are practicing our way. *Hai*.

Student C: Rōshi, did—a question I had—it's another one of those

⁶ Japanese for the Magadhi dialect of Sanskrit. Buddha is widely believed to have spoken in Magadhi on other occasions.

number questions. It says in the sūtra:

To preach the Great Vehicle definitively,
This dharma of mine, in nine divisions,
I preach by matching it to the beings,
Keeping the entry into the Great Vehicle as the basis—⁷

Nine divisions he says this dharma teaching has. Do you know anything about—

Suzuki-rōshi: Nine division.

Student C: Nine divisions.

Suzuki-rōshi: Nine division is, you know, according to the ability of the people, you know, there is nine kinds of worlds. So his teaching will, you know, reach nine division of the world.

Student C: Of the world.

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh.

Student C: Uh-huh.

Student D: They are enumerated—not the worlds but the names of the scriptures which apply to each world are enumerated in a footnote in the Kern book.⁸

Suzuki-rōshi: Excuse me?

Student D: In a footnote—

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh.

Student D: —in the translation by Kern, he speaks of the nine divisions, and he lists them. I think, actually, he says that there are nine divisions into which the dharma or—or sūtras or some holy writing fall, and they are listed [as] nine ones for Theravāda, and then nine ones for Mahāyāna. They sound pretty much the same.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student D: And then they're in a footnote.

⁷ Hurvitz, 1976, p. 33.

⁸ Kern, 1963, p. 45: "The nine divisions ... of Scripture, are with the Southern Buddhists, Sutta, [etc.] ... to which answer in the Northern enumeration Sūtra, [etc.]"

Suzuki-rōshi: Footnote? In this book, you mean?

Student D: I think, yeah.

Suzuki-rōshi: Nine division.

Student D: Yes. Maybe—maybe his understanding of nine divisions is not the same as yours. I don't know.

Suzuki-rōshi: Just a moment. Page—I will check later, you know. Will you give me the exact page, or—in this book or—which book?

Student D: In—in the translation of the *Lotus Sūtra* by Kern. The first one we had—from the Sanskrit.

Suzuki-rōshi: Oh, this one.

Student D: Yeah. I'm not sure what page. But I can look it up and then tell you.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm. Okay. Some other questions? *Hai*.

Student E: Could we talk about the triple worlds?

Suzuki-rōshi: Triple worlds?

Student E: Triple worlds, which is—he translates as the world of desire, and world of material, and world of immaterial.

Suzuki-rōshi: Oh. That is very old, you know, thinking. Even before Buddha, you know. Form world, and non-form world, or some non-material world, maybe. Form world—desire world, and form world, and non-material world. Three world. That is the world which we attain by practice. If we are just involved in sensual, you know, desire—activity, that is desire world. That is the lowest one.

And when we practice zazen, we will have form world. The form world—in form world, we will attain four, you know, four stage. I explained it many times, maybe, you know, if you—first stage will be the stage you have clear mind. You can think in that stage. And you will have good concentration. And you don't have—what you don't have is agitation and contamination of mind. And you will have the joy of conquering those, you know, agitation or strong passion. And you will—you—you will enjoy the conquering those, you know, things. When your drowsiness is contamination, you know, when you are not sleepy you feel good, you know [laughs]. You have that kind of joy. And your mind is clear. That will be the first stage. So form world is divided in this way.

The second stage will—will be the stage where you have pleasure—joy of renunciation of—from—renunciation from physical, you know, joy. No, no—mental joy or mental, you know, wrong thinking—wrong mental, you know—like fame—to seek for fame or material or success or something like that. But you have still physical, you know, desires—many physical desires.

The third stage will be—in third stage you have good concentration. You have good con- [partial word]—as long as you practice zazen, you are supposed to have good concentration [in the] first stage, second stage, or third stage, or fourth stage. But at the third stage, you have no more—you have no more physical joy. Of course you have no mental joy even. And you have—there you have good concentration, and form world will be almost completed in the third stage.

The fourth stage is—there you have no more feeling of being. You are almost non-being. That is the fourth stage. And on the fourth stage, sometime they put, you know, more stages. So—but that is the different version of the—maybe the fourth stage. And fourth stage will be extended. Another version of fourth stage will be no feeling of, you know, the fourth stage—ultimate fourth stage will be no feeling of being. And no feeling of no-being [laughs]. That way they added more and more like that. And those higher stage is called, you know, non-material stage. Hī- [partial word]—that is the stage we will attain by practice.

But interesting thing is, you know, it points out what kind of difficulty we have in our practice, you know. The most difficult one is not mental one, but more physical one is more difficult to conquer. That is opposite, you know, maybe. You may think physical one is more easier to conquer, but it is not so.

The psychological one may be divided in two—Buddhist divide in—psychological difficulties in two. One is the wrong view, or one-sided view is psychological difficulties we have. And this is rather easy to, you know, to get out—to get out of it. But more difficult psychological one is, you know, which we—which is difficult for us to know what kind of, you know, what kind of mistake we are psychologically have, like habit, you know—habitual way of thinking, you know.

If, you know, those who thinks, you know—for an instance, my watch—in case my watch is lost, you know, when someone's—when watch is lost, some people may think always, "Oh! Someone must have stolen it." [Laughs.] Whenever he lose something, he thinks someone must have stolen it. But it—it is not actually so, you know. It may not be so. But he thinks, you know, before he, you know, think even [laughs], he immediately, you know, observe in that—understand in

that way, even without thinking.

Because he does not think, that's his trouble [laughs]. If he is able—he has time to think before he give some judgment, it may be all right. But he has—he don't think, you know. But actually his mind giving some decision to it—conclusion to it. If he doesn't like someone, you know, before he think he is right or wrong, he thinks he is wrong, you know. That is more habitual way of thinking. And it was created by some—some kind of past experience. To get rid of this kind of habitual thinking is—is most difficult one. We call it *shibakku*.⁹ *Okaibakku*¹⁰ is the, you know, wrong view. *Shibakku* is more habitual things, which sticks—which always—by which your mind is always tainted or colored in some way.

So by our hard practice we should wash, you know, we should make our mind is—mind clear and purified. That is, you know, more difficult practice. So this kind of, you know, stage—I don't think there is such a stage, you know, clear stage. "This is first," or "This is the second," or "This is third." But it points out what kind of difficulty we have in our right thinking or right activity. It does not mean there is such world, you know: desire world, or form world, or non-material world. Okay? *Hai*.

Student F: In this chapter it says that—Buddha's speaking to his disciples and he says that they should evince the strength of great faith towards the dharma of the Buddha. How—how do you evince—

Suzuki-rōshi: How?

Student F: —how do you acquire or evince strength of faith? How do you evince—how do you acquire or evince strength of faith? How do you acquire faith?

Suzuki-rōshi: Acquire—how we acquire what—faith? Faith.

Student F: Trust in the teachings.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. This is, you know, actually only one way, you know. We—if Buddhist put emphasis on faith, you may feel strange. So I am trying not to say "faith" or [laughs], you know, "belief." I am trying. But actually there is no other way, you know, to. In this point, I think all religion will be the same. And it is that—you know, the other day¹¹ I explained in this way, you know: Eyes cannot see eyes, you know, although eyes can see many things, but eyes cannot see themselves. How eyes will know themselves is to put faith in it. And

⁹ Phonetic guess only. Spelling is not verified.

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

¹¹ SR-69-10-23 and SR-69-10-25.

that is, you know, not to be involved in dualistic idea. You know, when we say, "Don't be involved in dualistic idea," it means that "Don't be involved in idea of object or subject." Actually, Buddhist put emphasis on this point. The Hī- [partial word]—difference between Hīnayāna teaching and Mahāyāna teaching is this point. The view of substantiality, you know, is to put object in front of ourselves and to say, "Here is a book."

That is usual understanding, but is not real—is not complete and is not real. When we say, "Here is," you know, "this book," it means that, "Here is my mind." [Laughs.] "My mind is here," you know. "My mind is looking at it." When you reflect on yourself, you know, your mind is projected in objective world and you say "This is my mind," but actually my mind—your mind is here [patting self], you know, not there. So my mind [patting self] is not something which you can see, which you can understand. When you understand in that way, my mind—you mind is all over. Wherever you see something, that is your mind also. Do you understand? My mind is there. Nothing can be just objective. It—things which we see is subjective and objective, and my mind is always working on it. In this sense, this is so-called-it "essence of mind." Mind which follows—which is everywhere, and mind which create everything. And that mind is not particular mind to our- [partial word]—myself or to you. It is more big mind; it is not small mind because it is everywhere.

On what [laughs]—what was your question? [Laughter.] I lost your question [laughs, laughter].

Student F: It was about faith.

Suzuki-rōshi: Hmm?

Student F: It was how to—how to acquire faith.

Suzuki-rōshi: Faith, yeah—acquire faith. You know, that kind of mind, you know, is not the mind which you can put, you know, as a—which you can take as a face of object, you know, because everything is—that mind, you know, is on everything or in everything I don't know [laughs], but that mind is everywhere. Do you understand that mind? That kind of mind—to understand that kind of mind is just to, you know [laughs]—that is it, you know. No need to explain. But if—because you have always think or believe in something in term of here or there, or great or small, right or wrong, we must say something about it. But this is the ultimate truth which we should accept.

You may say, "If we shut our eyes, even though we shut our eyes, things exist," you know. But that is some created idea by your mind. So where—whatever you do, wherever you go, that mind is—follows

you, even though you don't figure out exactly what it is. So the only way is to put faith on it. Then you will have, you know, freedom from everything. That kind of mind is essence of mind. That kind of understanding is real understanding of emptiness.

Maybe, you know, you don't accept [laughs] what I say right now. Maybe it takes time. Do you understand what I am saying?

This kind of teaching is not Hīnayāna or Mahāyāna. It is ultimate truth. When *Lotus Sūtra*—knowing this point says—"you put faith in it" means you should know this—know this mind. This is essence of mind, or big mind. Okay? Did you understand [laughs]?

So Buddhist doesn't, you know, accept any kind of mind, you know, except this mind. We don't accept just objective being or subjective being. We don't say mind create things, or things produce function of mind—mind-like function, or material first, or mind first. We don't say so. Whatever it is, it is mind and b- [partial word]—materialistic—material and spiritual. That is, you know—and we only discuss something which is both material and spiritual. This is the golden rule of Buddhism [laughs, laughter].

Student G: What [1-2 words]—I don't understand. [Laughter.] I underst- [partial word]—the only think I make out of what you say is that—in answer to Ken [Berman]'s question—is that in the West, here, when we use the word "faith" we usually mean something outside ourselves which we can depend on.

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh.

Student G: Which would mean—

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh.

Student G: —that if we had faith in the *Lotus Sūtra* we could trust the *Lotus Sūtra* and the teaching. Or if we had faith in you, we could depend on you.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

Student G: Or if we had faith in our mother, we could depend on our mother.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

Student G: But from what you say, it doesn't sound that way.

Suzuki-rōshi: No.

Student G: It has to do with the state of mind rather than trusting on something.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

Student G: But what that state of mind is is very—it's not—not clear.

Suzuki-rōshi: [Laughs, laughing.] Not clear. Maybe. No one can make it clear.

Student G: The word "faith" is not a good word, maybe.

Suzuki-rōshi: Hmm?

Student G: The word "faith" is maybe not a good word.

Suzuki-rōshi: No. No, not at all good. So I don't like to use that words—"faith," you know. It seems to have something [to do with] "to put faith in it," you know. It is not so, you know. All the—all the things we see is just good expedience of, you know—good means of suggesting the true ultimate reality. So not only Small Vehicle, but all the—all the teaching and all the being, whatever it is, it is good means of Buddha. Who is Buddha? [Laughs.] We don't know. It is not something we can describe. It is beyond description, but something we should—we have to, you know, believe in it. Without that, we cannot think, we cannot say anything, we cannot do anything. Nothing exist.

To find out that essence of mind is—or how to talk about the essence of mind is good skillful means of Buddha. So he is always talking about [that] which is not possible to talk about. That is skillful mean—what it means by skillful mean. So for Buddhists there is no other teaching than skillful means. Whatever the teaching may be, that is just skillful means.

Student H: Rōshi, then all the teaching—the *Upanishads*, the Yoga sūtras, the Brahma sūtras—then they are all Buddhist teachings, aren't they?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. If we understand in that way.

Student I: If I fell down and broke my leg, then that's also the Buddha's teaching?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

Student I: And I should have faith in it?

Suzuki-rōshi: [Laughs.] Faith? Not faith—yeah.

Student I: Well, belief in [1-2 words]—

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

Student I: —feel that it's the Buddha's teaching.

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh. Even though you die, there is Buddha's teaching.

Student I: When—when the Buddha says "have faith in the teaching," that's a skillful means. It isn't the teaching itself, but it's a skillful means.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yes. Yes.

Student I: So when you—when you—

Suzuki-rōshi: So skillful means, in other word, is very important, you know. Without it, we—we have no approach to the—only approach is skillful means, because we cannot grasp that essence of mind. Only by skillful means we can grasp it.

Student I: Is—is skillful means direct transmission?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. Skillful means, you know, by—to transmit—we have nothing to transmit, you know. [Laughter.] Oh, you know—

Student I: Do you not use "understanding"—in—in a sense, do we not use the word "understanding" instead of "faith"? You have understanding—is—it seems to me is the word that we use—the Buddhists use, instead of "having faith" is to "have understanding."

Suzuki-rōshi: Understanding is—is necessary, you know. This kind of talk is understanding, you know. Although we cannot—unless you understand what I am saying completely, you know [laughs], you may not understand.

Student I: I have to believe it, though, before I can understand it. [Laughter.]

Suzuki-rōshi: Believe, yeah.

Student I: Believe.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. Anyway [laughter], nothing wrong to believe in

[laughs]—in essence of mind. Nothing wrong with it.

Student I: If we don't understand, is that skillful means?

Suzuki-rōshi: If you don't understand, you know, you should try to understand it. If you understand what I am saying, you know, you will understand there is no way to, you know, to understand it [laughs, laughter].

Student I: How do you feel, then, when you always ask us, "Do we understand?" [Laughter.] It always seems so tongue-in-cheek, like—like you don't want us to understand, and that's understanding. And it's like—it's like a—something chasing its tail. And—and I always try to push that out of my mind when you ask that.

Suzuki-rōshi: [Laughs, laughter.] You know [laughter], what I am saying is very logical, you know. So I say, "Do you understand? Do you agree with me?" you know. So far, nothing wrong with my statement. That is what I am saying. You see? And the conclusion is you don't—it is not possible to understand the essence of mind. That is my conclusion [laughs, laughter]. And when I say, "Do you understand?" means, "Is there any," you know, "mistake in my," you know, "way of thinking?"

Student I: Can we experience the essence of mind?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. Yes and no. [Laughs.] Yes, but it is not possible to have full experience of it. That is why we continue our practice. And that is why we enjoy our practice, because there is—it is endless, you know, trip, you know. [Laughter.] One after another you will [laughs] enjoy, you know, various things. And yet there is no end, you see? But you feel very good, and you are not—you are not fooling—you are not fooled by anything. You have actual, you know, feeling in it—in your life. That is more, you know, our way of life.

Oh— *[Probably discovers the lateness of the hour. Chant follows.]*

Source: City Center original tape. Verbatim transcript by Bill Redican (7/9/01).