

**Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi**  
**MONEY AND LABOR**  
**Sunday Morning, May 24, 1970**  
**City Center, San Francisco**

Good morning. Actually this morning I asked Yoshida-rōshi<sup>1</sup> to give some talk to you, but as he—as she has just arrived from Japan, and she said she is not ready to speak yet, so I am going to speak [say] something.

I introduced her already to you, but some of you here may not know her, so I think I have to introduce Yoshida-rōshi first. [Aside of 1-2 sentences in Japanese.] Yoshida-rōshi. [She answers briefly in Japanese. Suzuki-rōshi then whispers *Dōmo arigatō*.]

She is one of the important disciples of Hashimoto-rōshi who passed away—

[Suzuki-rōshi asks Yoshida-rōshi a question in Japanese about Hashimoto Ekō-rōshi. She answered briefly in Japanese.] Ah.

—who passed away four years ago.<sup>2</sup> Hashimoto-rōshi is famous teacher who studied various old rituals and form of especially *okesa* and robes and—besides study of *Shōbōgenzō*. By Hashimoto-rōshi our rituals improved a lot, so we are so fortunate to have her here.

Joyce—Zenkosan—has been studying with—under her at **Kaizen-ji**<sup>3</sup> near Nagoya Temple, and we expect her always to come and give more fundamental understanding of our rituals and way of observing things—not only just rituals, but also how we should behave according to Dōgen-zenji's way.

As Dōgen-zenji, you know—since Dōgen-zenji, it is seven hundred—more than seven hundred and fifty years [since he was born], so

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<sup>1</sup> Yoshida Eshun-rōshi: Teacher of *okesa* sewing in the lineage of Hashimoto Eko-rōshi. Hashimoto-rōshi (teacher of Katagiri-rōshi) learned the Nyoho-e pattern of the *okesa* from Kōdō Sawaki-rōshi. Sawaki-rōshi in turn had studied, at Koki-ji temple, the style of *okesa* sewn by the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Shingon and Ritsu master Jiyun Sonja, who had reconstructed the traditional pattern for the *okesa* from the *Mahavagga* and other Vinaya-pitaka texts. [Source: "Notes on Okesa Lineage at Zen Center," an interview with Shōhaku Okumura-rōshi, 23 February 1996, recorded by Shōsan Victoria Austin.] See also SR-71-06-20.

<sup>2</sup> Hashimoto Ekō-rōshi (1890-1965) was a scholar of Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* and an authority on the origins of the traditional *okesa*. He was Dainin Katagiri's second master at Eihei-ji.

<sup>3</sup> Not found in *Zengaku-daijiten* dictionary.

everything is not so clear. And meantime, you know, our way [was] mixed up with some other things which was not so good. So still we are studying his way, what was his way. And because we have many things which we cannot accept completely, so that is why we study Dōgen-zenji's way. We think Dōgen-zenji's way cannot be like that [laughs]. That is why we study. Maybe that is wrong—wrong, but anyway we want to accept teaching sincerely with our heart or true mind. That is why we have to study. And we think he is the most sincere student or teacher among the teachers we had—we have had.

This morning I want to speak on relationship between our everyday life, especially relationship between material and our—we Buddhists: what kind of, you know, attitude we have about material. When we say "spiritual life," you know, people [are] liable to ignore material. That [laughs] is big mistake, according to Dōgen-zenji. Material and, you know, mind or spirit is same, according to Buddhism. We—we—we know that all—all of us has buddha-nature, but, if so, we are very careful how to—the relationship between—between us. But we tend to ignore the relationship between we human being and other being, like plants or river—especially, you know, food.

You know—you—you think food is very important, so you study food. But the way you study food is not always right because you put emphasis on yourself, you know, ignoring the value of food, you know. We have very selfish discrimination about food [laughs]. I think that is a kind of selfish attitude of human being. According to Buddha, everything has buddha—buddha-nature. If so, we should respect everything as you respect yourself. That is, you know, main point. So how you, you know, appreciate food is the most important point—before you have discrimination about food.

Buddhists from all the time—all—always noticed this point very strictly. You may say that is too much. But, you know, for an instance, my father<sup>4</sup> was a priest, you know. When he was going home, he, you know, if he find some, you know, vegetables on the roadside, he picked up [laughs] and he brought the old vegetables the farmers and people—which farmers and people throw away. And he cooked it [laughing] for us, and so I had to eat it.

There was small river in front of the temple. The many rotten old, you know, vegetables would [come] floating down from upper river [laughs, laughter]. So as soon as he find some vegetable-like thing, you know, not exactly [laughing, laughter]—to me, you know, that was not exactly vegetables. It—it might be good for compost [laughs], but not for eat. But he cooked it, and he said, "Everything has buddha-nature. [Laughs, laughter.] You should not throw away." And wherever he goes, you know, he talked about how valuable the

<sup>4</sup> Suzuki Butsumon Sogaku (c. 1858–1933).

food is, you know. You should not throw it—throw them away.

So my teacher, you know, my master<sup>5</sup> was my father's disciple, so he was also very strict with, you know, food. Here you say, you know, you study what food is good for you, you know, what kind of food you should take. But to me, you know—and they are very much proud of their knowledge of, you know, food: how much, you know, nourishment some certain food has, and this is acid, and this is [laughs]—this food contain a lot of—what do you say—alkali?—yeah—opposite of acid. But, you know, to me it is—yeah, I understand. I think that is good [laughs]. But before you say so, you know, you forget something [laughs]. You are—you make—you make—I wonder if you don't make big mistake, you know.

To appreciate the value of food is first. And what kind of food you choose is next, I think. Dōgen-zenji, you know, left instruction about our cook, what kind of, you know, spirit we must have when you become a cook in the monastery. He says the duty of cook in a monastery is completely different from usual, you know, cook in city. Completely different. So you should know what is the duty of a cook. And he left, you know, *Tenzo-kyōkun*—instruction for the cook in the monastery.<sup>6</sup>

And in the—in his instruct- [partial word]—one of his instructions was, "Don't say *kome*." *Kome* is "[uncooked] rice," you know. You should say *okome*. *O* is honorific, you know, prefix to *kome*. *Kome* is rice; *okome* means, you know, we—if—when we say *okome* we respect, you know, expression of—as a[n] expression of respect we say, without saying *kome*. Dōgen-zenji says, "You shouldn't say *kome*. You should say *okome*."

So Japanese—most Japanese people, you know, put honorific prefix to everything. Instead of saying *chawan*,<sup>7</sup> we say *ochawan*. Instead of saying *kesa*, we say *okesa*. That is, you know—this kind of understanding is the understanding we Buddhists have had. Dōgen-zenji put emphasis on this point. He didn't throw away even leftover water. He respectfully returned the water to the river. All the confusion we have right now in our society comes from the lack of understanding of what is, you know, about what is material.

You know, in our society we respect labor, you know. Labor is [laughs], you know, the most important element when you value things. But before you, you know, count, you know, value [of] the labor, there must be something you should think, you know—

<sup>5</sup> Gyokujun So-on (c. 1877-1934).

<sup>6</sup> "Tenzo-kyōkun" ("Instructions for the Tenzo") is a fascicle of Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*.

<sup>7</sup> *chawan* (Jap.): teacup, rice bowl.

something which was given to us. There is something here, and if you work on it, you know, it will serve your purpose.

But labor is not—is not only thing which you should count. Most you—you pay only for labor. That is, I think, a kind of arrogance of human being. You should—you ignore the buddha-nature which everything has. If we notice this point, our system of life will change a lot. Of course, you know, labor is important. Labor is—why labor is important is labor is—will be—make sense when you work on, with respect, work on things with respect. That is the—should be the true nature of labor, you know. Labor is—without, you know, understanding or without having deep respect to the things which was given, and to only to count labor is big mistake. So labor doesn't make any sense. Labor is, you know, when we work on things with respect, that is our human life in its true sense.

We, you know, we pay, you know, mostly you think you pay for the labor, but, you know, I don't think that is right understanding. You pay for the labor and for the things which was given to us by God, according to your understanding, or by Buddha. Only when we have this kind of understanding of things, our system or economic—our economic system will change. I am not, you know, economist [laughs, laughter], but I feel in that way.

So money is also, you know—should be treated in that way. You pay—you work on things with respect. Money is, you know, to exchange the value of things and labor, you know. So money include, you know—behind money there is respect for the—for the material or for the things, you know, which was given to us from Buddha, and our respect to the labor, the effort someone else made.

And to exchange means to purify, you know. You—when you exchange things, you know, it means to purify things. If you pay some money, you know, you don't w- [partial word]—you have no—you don't owe anything for anyone, you know. But that is also, you know—something is missing in that idea. Even though you pay for the labor, you know, there is something which you cannot pay [laughs]: that is, you know, the value of things which was given to you by Buddha.

But only when you pay, with respect, you know, for the things which was given to us for the labor which was worked by someone else, with respect, then, you know, in this sense, if you pay some money when you get something with this—only when you do it with this kind of understanding, you can purify your life, your activity of changing things. Without this, you know, idea, if you—even though you pay for the things you get, you owe a lot of [laughs]—you owe a lot.

So that is why, you know, we must have always deep respect for things, for money, for labor. This is, you know, Dōgen-zenji's, you know, idea of everyday life.

So the money is not yours. It belongs to our society. Because you think the money is yours, you know [laughing], you will even, you know, you sometime you think to—"money is dirty." You think in that way—maybe some people may think, or some people may, you know, attach to the money too much. That is, you know, the—that kind of, you know, idea is dirty idea [laughs]—not pure idea. When you say "money is dirty," your understanding is dirty [laughs, laughter].  
*[Sentence finished. Tape turned over.]*

... won't be dirty, if material which was given to us is, you know, pure or the effort we make is pure.

Here, you know—so to accumulate money can be allowable. Only you accumulate to be ready to, you know, go to hospital [laughs, laughter], to be ready to die, you know—funeral parlor [laughing, laughter]. It costs a lot of money. I have \$1000—\$2000—a lot of money [laughs]—so, you know, we must have maybe \$500 or \$1000.

But to rely on the power of the money is wrong. That is the—that is the way Buddha did not like at all. At that time, the money system was not so strong, so he said, "Don't accumulate things. You should eat," you know, "you should live on the food you—food which was offered just before you eat. And you should not beg [for] more than the food which will suffice next meal," you know.

This is, I think, big—I think Buddha was big scholar of economy [laughs]. That is, you know, the most important, you know, point of economy, I think, you know. Why we have money is to exchange things. We should not, you know, stop the current of the money. So in this sense, you know, we say everything changes. That is Buddha's, you know, first principle. Everything changes, including, you know—money is the—not symbol, but, you know—money express the value of or—value of things, which change. If the value, you know, if things is valuable because we can eat, you know, or we can live on it, then money also should—should not stop. If money stops, it—that is business depression [laughs]. If money is going smoothly all over our—in our society, our society is healthy.

So money is—money purifies our, you know, world. It is not something dirty. It is very pure. It is very important thing for us, when we take good care of it, when we respect it. Because you don't respect—you don't pay enough respect to the money, money become dirty. Dirty. Doesn't matter how much money you have, you know. Even [if] the money is sm- [partial word]—amount of money you have

[is] little, you should pay respect to it, and you should make best use of it. How you make best use of it is to make it, you know, work—to make it help our society.

The other day, you know, we officers discussed how we should run this Zen Center, you know. We don't like to say you should pay [laughs]: "If you want to come and study with us, you should pay some money," you know. We don't like, but for us, you know, that is a part of practice, you know. Just sit in black cushion is not only practice, you know [laughs]. The all—how you treat money is, you know, very important practice for us.

Most people forget all about how you survive here, you know [laughs]. You think you can survive alone in the remoted mountain [laughs], but even though you are in remoted mountain, or that you can go to the big mountain, is because of the money [laughs]. You cannot work to the Sierra or Rocky Mountain. It is very foolish idea, you know, to ignore—to—not to understand how we survive here. If you, you know, miss this point, whatever you say, that is payback [?]. It is much better to—to read white paper [laughs].

Before we study Buddhism, we should know what we are doing and how we survive here. So we think this is a part of practice, but we do not, you know—we do not reject people just because of money. We—we are ready to help with each other, but each one of us should purify our zendō with money [laughs], first of all [laughs, laughter]. That is why I say: "You should pay! Give me some money!" [Laughs, laughter.] If you give me some money, someone will take—will take good care of it, you know. We should not accumulate money for Buddha [laughs], because Buddha didn't—didn't like to accumulate anything.

Thank you very much.

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Source: City Center transcript. Entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997. Transcript checked against tape by Bill Redican (11/31/01). Miyagawa Keishisan kindly provided assistance with the translation of Japanese terms.