

**Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi**  
**SANDŌKAI LECTURE X**  
**Thursday, June 25, 1970**  
**Tassajara**

[This lecture is concerned with the following lines of the *Sandōkai*:

*Meian ono-ono aitaishite,  
hisuru ni zengo no ayumi no gotoshi.*

(Transliteration by Kazuaki Tanahashi.)

Darkness and brightness stand with each other  
like when one foot is forward and the other is behind in walking.

(Translation by Suzuki-rōshi.)]

Now we are still talking about the reality from the light of independency. Even though we are discussing about independency, we always refer to the dependency-interdependency, so you may, you know, feel as if I am always [laughs] talking same thing. But actually it is not so. We are talking about, you know, independency now, not dependency.

"Dependency and independency," we say, but it is actually two side of the one coin. People say, you know, Japanese people [laughs] are very tough. People may say [so]. But that is the one side of the Japanese, you know, people. The other side is, you know, softness. Should be, but I don't know exactly [laughs]. I hope so [laughs]. But they are very kind. Some people, you know, who visited Japan may say Japanese people are very kind. But some people may say Japanese people are very tough. But for a long time, because of the Buddhistic training, they are trained in that way, you know. Even in children's song, we say, he is, you know, describing hero called Momotaro. Momotaro. Peach Boy. Peach Boy. Do you know Momotaro?

Momotaro was born when an old couple—old couple lived in the riverside. One day, old mother picked up a peach from the stream and came back [to] her home. And from the peach, you know, Momotaro was born. Momotaro came out [laughs], and he was very strong but very gentle [laughs]—very kind and gentle. But he was very strong. Japanese children sing a song: *Ki wa ya sa shi ku te—chi ka ra mo chi*.<sup>1</sup> "He was very kind, but he was very strong." That was

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<sup>1</sup> Momotaro is a classic nursery song of Japan. The lyrics are found, for

Momotaro. Not only he was strong, but he was very kind. It is Japanese idealistic character. What do you call? You must have some, you know, some—

**Student:** You'd call him a man you can ride the river with.

Oh. [Laughs.] No. What—

**Students:** Folk hero. Folk hero.

Huh?

**Student:** A folk hero.

Uh-huh. "Folk hero." Yeah. Folk hero.

That, you know, unless— Without soft mind, you cannot [be] really strong. That he is strong— Why he is so strong is he has soft mind. If he is just, you know, if he has the other side of the character, he cannot be really strong. Because he is very sympathetic with someone, so sometime, you know, because of sympathy, to help someone, you know, he will be very strong.

But strong person just for himself is not so strong, you know. Strong person who is, on the other hand, very kind will be supported [by] people, and could be a really folk hero, you know. Just strong is not really strong. When we have both soft side and strong side, he could be a really strong.

And, you know, it is easy to, you know, to fight and win, maybe, but it is not so easy to endure when he is defeated, you know, without crying, you know. Let your enemy—not enemy, but let your foe, you know, beat you. "Okay." You know, that is very difficult. Unless you can endure the bitterness of the defeat, you know, you cannot be really strong.

So to be strong means, you know, to be gentle and kind and meek, maybe. If you can be, you know, weak when you— If you are ready to be weak, you are very strong. We say: "Willow tree—willow tree, you know—cannot be broken by snow," we say. *Yanagi ni yuki ore nashi*.<sup>2</sup> *Yuki ore* is "snow break," or [laughs] weight of the snow will break, maybe, some strong tree, but tree like a willow cannot be. Even though weight of the snow will bend, will twist the branch, but even heavy snow like we had the year before—last year—you know,

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example, in *We Japanese*, p. 322.

<sup>2</sup> *Yanagi* = willow; *ni* = [?]; *yuki* = snow; *ore* = broken piece (of twig); *nashi* = [?].

cannot break the willow branch. *Yanagi ni yuki ore nashi*. Bamboo, you know, bend quite easily. Looks like very weak, but no snow can break it. This is always true.

So *Meian*. Darkness and brightness is opposite. [Someone writes on board.] Oh. [Laughter.] It is better to forget [laughs, laughter]. Better without [laughs]. *Meian*, you know. *Mei* is "brightness"; *an* is "darkness"—absolute and relative. The pair of opposite, you know, here [thumps once on table]. *Meian*—brightness and darkness.

*Hisiru* means "to face each other," to be a pair, you know, face [-to-face] with each. "With each other" is *ai*, and a "face with each other" or "stand with each other" is *tai*. And this is each and this is each other, and this is stand [presumably pointing to Chinese characters on the blackboard]. *Ono-ono* means "each other." *Ai* also "each other." *Ai*, you know.

*Hisiru*. *Hisiru* means "to stand against"—something like that, you know. To fall with [against] [laughs], you know, standing with each other. *Hisiru ni*. *Hisiru ni* is "like." *Gotoshi* is also "like." If you compare, you know, this is "compare." This is like the "foot forward and backward," and "forward and behind." *Zen* is "forward," *go* is "behind." "Foot behind and forward and behind"—this is walk, in walking.

This is very good, you know, parable—very good way of explaining oneness or, you know, actual function of the two pair of opposite. This is actually explaining our practice, how we apply, you know, the pair of opposite idea in our everyday life—like zazen and enlightenment, and reality and idea, good and bad, strong and weak—

Uh, can you hear me? Oh. You don't hear me. That's awful. Why don't you come between the two line? Here. [Pauses as students file in.]

The people, you know, when they feel they are strong, you know, they don't, you know, want to be weak, you know. The people who think he is—they are weak, you know, never try to be strong [laughs]. That is quite usual, you know. "I am very weak." [Laughs.] He remains always weak. And he cannot be strong. And people who is strong—who thinks, you know, who think he is strong, you know— For the people who thinks he is strong, it is difficult for them to be weak, you know. But sometime we should be strong and sometime we should be weak, you know. Just if you remain always weak, or if you always want to be strong, then they cannot be strong in its true sense.

When you learn something, you know, you should be able to, you

know, teach people. You should, you know, [apply] same effort to teach something. And if you want to teach, you should be, you know, you should be humble enough to learn something. Then you can teach them. Just because you know something—if you try to teach something to others, you cannot teach anything. When you are, you know, ready to be taught by someone, if necessary, then you can teach people in its true sense. So to learn is to teach, and to teach is to learn. If you think you are always a student [laughs], you cannot learn anything. Why you learn is because you have to, you know, teach others after you learn something, you know.

So to observe some morality, you know— Actually, there is no actual moral code, you know, moral standard, but how you find out the actual moral code is when you think, you know, how to teach someone—you will find out the moral code for yourself [laughs]. The moral code is for others, and when you find out some moral code for others, you will have actual moral code for yourself. After Japan was defeated completely [laughs], you know, absolutely surrendered, and before Japan was completely defeated, they thought Japanese people had some, you know, teaching or moral code which they should, you know, observe, and if they only observed that kind of moral code, they will not make any mistake. And their moral code is absolutely right and straight. They thought in that way. But that is—that moral code, unfortunately, [was] something which was written up or, you know, set up in Meiji—first part of Meiji period.

So after losing, you know, the war, after they lost the confidence in their morality, they didn't know what to do, what kind of kind of morals they should observe. They didn't know what to do. But there is— It was not so actually it should—it couldn't be so difficult to find out the moral code. If you— I always said, "You have your children. If you think of your children and how to raise your children, then you will naturally know the moral code for yourself." When you think moral code is just for yourself, that is one-sided understanding. Moral code is rather for others, to help others. And naturally that will—the moral code you will find out, to help others, or how to be kind to others, then that moral code is also for yourself.

So we say, to go heading to east one hundred miles is to go heading to the west one hundred miles. When the moon is high, you know, the moon in the water will be high. But usually people, you know, observe the moon above the water, and they do not see the moon in the water. So when you see the moon deep into the water, you should know that this moon is very high, you know. That moon is deep means that the moon is high. We should have this kind of understanding. So, you know, the moon in the water is independent, you know, but—and also the moon over the, high up on the water, is

also independent. But, you know, the moon on the water is the moon in the water too. We should understand in that way. So the moon in the water is independent. The moon over the water is also independent. When you are strong, you should be strong. You should be very tough. But that toughness comes from your gentle kindness, you know. When you are kind you should be just kind, but it does not mean you are not strong.

So ladies are weak, you know, physically weak [laughs]. Because ladies are physically weak, they are strong. Sometime, you know, they are stronger than [laughs] boys are. That is true. We don't know which is stronger. When they, you know, completely independent—they have completely independent nature, which is their own—they are, you know, they have same strength, equal strength, with everyone: absolutely equal strength. When you are comparing, you know, which is stronger, you know—A or B, I or he, you know—then you don't have real strength. When you are completely independent, then—completely independent with your nature, you know—then it means that you are absolutely—absolute power in relative situation. So in relative situation, man and woman, you know, relative nature, there is absolute power. Do you understand? When, you know, woman is involved in competition, you know, with men, they are not so strong. When woman become completely [laughs] woman, they have absolute power. Do you understand this point?

**Student:** Mm-hmm.

[Laughs.]

So brightness and darkness, although it is pair of opposite, but, you know, it is al [incomplete word]—at the same time, they have equality. For an instance, like step before and forward and backwards—not backwards, forward and back. This is very good, you know, parable to explain— It, it— [Student coughs loudly.] Excuse me. Do you understand, you know, this parable? Absolute and relative is like a step forward and before and back. Step before and back. Step, you know, forward when you walk, you know. Step forward immediately becomes step behind [laughs]. Then, is this step—your right foot is which step [laughs]: before or step behind [laughs]? Which is it? We say "brightness and darkness." But which is darkness and which is brightness [laughs]? It is difficult to tell.

**Student:** Couldn't tell you the difference.

Mmm.

So step—what does it say here in this [R. H. Blyth's] translation? "Like

the foot before and the foot behind in walking." "Like the foot before and the foot behind in walking." "Foot before and foot behind," we say. Foot before and foot behind. But when you're actually walking, you know, there is no step behind or no foot before. Actually walking. If you stop, you know, walking and think [laughs, laughter], right hand sometime maybe foot before and left hand maybe foot behind.

*Ohh.* Can you hear me? No? Difficult?

And it means that, at the same time, when, you know, when you are walking, it means that actual practice, you know, when you are actually practicing our way, there is no foot before or no foot behind. But if you think about it, you know, there is foot behind and foot before. So when you think, there is brightness and darkness. But when actually practice our way or when actually your foot is walking, there is no, you know, brightness or no darkness or no foot before or no foot behind.

And if I say so, you may think it is not necessary to think about zazen is no good [laughs]. And you should just sit. If you say so [laughs], you are also, you know, caught by idea of this foot is foot before and the left foot is foot behind. Then you cannot walk [laughs] any more. If you forget all about, you know, left hand, left foot, or right foot, you can walk. Actually when you are walking, you have no idea of left foot or right foot [laughs]. If you are aware of right foot and left foot, you cannot walk, you cannot run.

As I said, you know, if you chew your food there is no rice, or no pickles, or no soup [laughs], you know, if you chew it up. And if you mix it. And when you mix it in your mouth, it will be, you know, digested and in your tummy, and food will serve their own purpose. Even so, we should eat, we should, you know, dish out one thing after another, one dish and after another. And dessert should come last. There is some order, you know. Even though there is some order, you should chew it and you should mix it, or else food does not serve its own purpose. It is necessary to think about it, to make recipe, but it is also necessary to mix everything up and chew it up.

[Someone writes on blackboard.]

*Meian ono-ono aitaishite,  
hisuru ni zengo no ayumi no gotoshi.*

This is very good interpretation of the reality and good explanation of our practice—good suggestion. How we practice our way and what kind of activity is going [on] in our everyday life. With this line, the interpretation of the reality from the light of independency [is]

finished.

### Question/Answer Session

Do you have some question? *Hai*.

**Student A [Mel Weitsman]:** Rōshi, when you say "independency," I'm confused with whether you mean "independence" or "interdependency."

**Suzuki-rōshi:** "Interdependency." Oh, no. "Independency." Excuse me. Interdependency is more dependency, you know [laughs].

**Mel Weitsman:** "Independence" is—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Independent—you know, idea of independency and dependency.

**Student B:** Rōshi, in English we have no word "independency." We have the word "independence"—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Oh! "Independence." "Independence." Excuse me. "Independence" means [laughs] to me, you know, it is not fit, you know, so well. "Independence" means, you know, may be noun, but more—what I mean is, you know, noun, but maybe same thing.

**Student C:** We have a noun "dependency" so we can have "independency."

**Students in background:** Right. Yeah.

**Student C:** We have the other. "Dependency" is a good English word.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mmm-mm. And you have no in—

**Student C:** No "independency." [Laughs, laughter.]

**Student B:** Now we have an "independency"!

**Student D:** You limp on one foot.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** One foot. [Laughs.] "Independent" is so strong, you know. So there is no need to have [laughs] so delicate word. [Strikes the table with his stick.] If you are independent [strikes table again], that's all. [Laughs, laughter.] You don't care anything. [Laughs,

laughter.] "Shut up!" [Laughs, laughter.] That is not what we mean. So, you know, independent, you know—when you are independent, you know, it is very, you know, vulnerable and weak situation—dangerous, at least.

**Student E:** Isn't this idea that people get of their own independence a delusion that they get? They don't realize that— [2-3 words inaudible].

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yeah. Delusion, yeah, actually so. When, you know, when they think, you know, "I am independent," it is not true, you know. You are dependent on everything.

**Student F:** Rōshi, if a woman competes with a man, she's vulnerable? Weak?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** "Weak?" I cannot say "weak," but, you know—

**Student F:** I was trying to figure out how you can tell the difference between what a woman and what a man's supposed to be.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Uh-huh. More? Excuse me? [Students were talking among themselves. SR is apparently talking to one of them.]

**Student G:** I'm sorry [laughs].

**Student F:** You know, like, if a woman competes with a man—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Uh-huh.

**Student F:** —then she's weak, but how do you know what the man and woman is supposed to be like in the beginning? Anyone?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Like— Weak, I don't say. If you compete, you know, man and woman, anyway, you know, and the comparing with each other by some standards, setting up some standards, you know, or—in some category you compete, you know. Sometime man will be stronger. And sometime the woman will be stronger. Anyway, you know, you cannot be always stronger—strong. But when you become absolutely, you know, woman, you know, you have always absolute value, because no one take over your position. So you are needed.

**Student F:** But that's not—that's my question. Is that just mean having children and keeping house?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** [Laughs, laughter.] [*Tape turned over.*] [SR and students still laughing] ... big problem now. [Laughs, laughter.] My

mistake, maybe. I'll talk with you some other time. [Loud laughter.]

Ahh. Do you have some question? More question? Please ask me something, you know [laughter]. Maybe you couldn't hear me so well [laughs].

**Student G:** Rōshi?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** *Hai.*

**Student G:** Rōshi, I have some trouble with just the relevancy of your lecture [nervous laughter]. I'd just like you to say one more thing about it; I don't know what. I can't quite see what it's all about. I know you're talking about opposites and things like that.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Uh-huh. [Laughs.] The re [partial word]— Hmm. I am, you know— Purpose of what I am saying is, you know, to open some quite different approach to the reality. You know, you are, you know, observing things just from one side or the other side. That's all. And you stick to some understanding just from one side. That is why I am talking in this way. This is necessary. As a Buddhist— Buddhist has no, you know, strictly speaking, no teaching we have. We don't have any teaching. We have no god or, you know, no deity. What we have is nothingness [laughs]. That's all. We don't have anything. So how can— How, you know, is it possible for Buddhists to be religious, you know? What kind of, you know, what kind of composure we have, you know? It will be the point. You will be— Will be your question. The answer is this kind of understanding of reality, not some special idea of God or deity, but the understanding of reality, you know, which we are always facing to. Where we are? What we are doing, you know? Who is he? Who is she, you know? That is, you know, our understanding of—

When we understand "she" or "he" in this way, we don't need to have any special teaching or idea of God because, strictly speaking, everything is God for us. When we observe things, you know, in this way, everything can be a god for us. So we don't need any special God. Moment after moment we are facing to the God. And each one of us [is] also God or Buddha. So we don't need any special idea of God. That is, you know, maybe the point. *Hai.*

**Student H:** Rōshi, that sounds very good to me, but then how come we take vows? Like when Ed and Meg got married—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student H:** —you said that they should take refuge in the triple

treasure and the, you know, the ten cardinal precepts. And things seemed [1-3 words inaudible].

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yeah, yeah. We take vow or we observe precepts. We read sutra. But sūtra or precepts—understanding of sutra or precepts should be right understanding like this. If we don't— Even though you read, you know, scriptures or observe precepts without right understanding, you know, that will be the precepts, which is brightness or darkness. So when you are caught by, or when you rely on precepts or scripture, it is not Buddhist scripture any more.

**Student H:** But then, if— I mean, if I say, "Okay, I'm not going to speak ill of others."

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mmm?

**Student H:** Suppose I take a precept that says I won't speak ill of others.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student H:** And, you know, if I follow that precept—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student H:** —it seems like [aside inaudible]— If I don't follow the precept, it seems like there's no reason for it at all, you know, and if I do follow the precept religiously, it seems like, you know, I am being caught by it.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mmm.

**Student H:** I mean, I'd be happy to take the *Sandōkai* as precepts that— You know, I just don't understand. If they're not rigid, they don't seem to be any use at all. And if they are rigid they don't seem to be consistent with the *Sandōkai* and things like that.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Uh-huh.

**Student H:** I mean, it— I always wondered about that part in the meal chant where we say, you know, "to practice good and avoid evil."

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student H:** And I asked you about that once, and you said something to the effect that that means just, you know, pay attention to what we're doing. Don't look around, don't, you know, don't get caught by

it.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student H:** But if that's so, I mean, why don't we say that? Why don't we say, "I practice— I vow to," you know, "practice zazen in my everyday life and not be caught by rules"?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student H:** You know, why go through this "good and evil" thing, you know? It doesn't seem— It seems kind of phony.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Nooo. [Laughter.] You are trying to argue with me, that's all [laughs, laughter]. You need precepts, actually, you know, even though, you know, you shouldn't, you know [laughs]. It is not possible to violate precepts actually. You know, you cannot. But you feel, you know, as if you are violating precepts, you know. Actually, you feel in that way. So, if you actually feel in that way, you should accept your feeling and, if you accept that feeling, then you have to, you know, say something: "Excuse me," or "I am sorry," or something. That is also quite natural. This is, you know, working precepts. This is, you know, dead: "Don't kill" is dead precepts. "Excuse me" is actual working precepts, which is, you know, not foot behind or foot before. Do you understand? If you read precepts [and say or think], "Okay, I will do that," you know, that is precepts. And when you feel you violate it, you may say, "Oh, excuse me." That is quite natural, you know.

**Student H:** If it were natural—and I feel very natural about some of the precepts—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student H:** You know, I feel just naturally that I shouldn't, you know, talk nasty things about people.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student H:** But sometimes, mmm— [as if to say, "I don't know"]

**Suzuki-rōshi:** [Laughs, laughter.]

**Student H:** If you said to me, like, not to take harmful drugs? At least sometimes it seems natural to take those things, because they don't seem so harmful. But, you know, I mean, if the precepts were all natural, and, you know, if I just wanted to do it like that—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Student H:** —and if it works [?], you know, that's a different thing.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** When you say so, you know, you may say, "It is quite natural for me to live in this world, to be born in this world." You know, it means that. You see? But is it natural? [Laughs, laughter.] [Students commenting off-mike.] Hmm? [Laughter.] You are already accepted, you know, which you shouldn't accept. Why did you come here? That is already maybe big mistake [laughs, laughter].

**Student H:** They didn't say [1-2 words inaudible] when I came here.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Excuse me?

**Student H:** They didn't ask me about precepts. They just wanted to know if I had \$2.50 a day.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** [Laughs, loud laughter.]

**Student I [David Chadwick?]:** You know, maybe the office should say, "You have \$2.50, and are you willing to follow their precepts?" [Laughter.]

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Good bargain. Good deal. But it cannot be so, you know, simple. So we— Anyway, you know, you should say, "Oh, I am sorry." That is necessary. If you, you know— When you are born, you cannot say so [laughs, laughter]. But now you can say so [laughs]. So you should say, "Oh, I am sorry to be your daughter or to be your son. Oh, excuse me." [Laughs, laughter.] "Oh, I am sorry I caused you a lot of trouble for you. Oh, excuse me." You should say so. That is actual precepts, you know. *Hai*.

**Student J [Grahame Petchey?]:** Rōshi, sometimes I feel this way about listening to lectures. And maybe this is somewhat the same question that Stanley was asking. It's like, at one time I was just walking along, and suddenly someone came and said, "Did you realize that when you're walking, when one foot is ahead, the other foot's behind?"

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student J:** I said, "No!" [Laughter.] "I hadn't thought about that." And so for a long time, then, that amazed me: You know, that when one foot was ahead the other one was behind.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student J:** And I was very aware. "I wonder why he ever asked me such a," you know, "a question like that? Was I aware that when one foot is ahead the other is behind?" And I used to think about it a lot, you know. [Laughter.] One foot ahead and the other behind, and it's always that way, but this was a very strange thing and it occupied my attention: the one foot being ahead and the other behind.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student J:** And then after a long time, I found that I was just walking again—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student J:** —you know, and then I didn't think so much about that. And then one day as I was walking, another man came up and said, "Did you realize that when you're walking, one foot is ahead and the other is behind?"

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student J:** And—it's like, I feel right at that point right now.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student L:** You know, I [laughs]—I still don't understand it at all, you know: That one foot is ahead and the other is behind.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** But—

**Student L:** I still have to deal with it somehow, you know, that I can't understand what it means. But it's certainly right there.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student L:** And half of me says, "What's the relevance of it?"—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student L:** —because it doesn't bother me any more—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student L:** —and another half of me says, "Yeah but it's still happening like that," you know, "every time you take a step. That's

still right there happening."

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm. You know—

**Student L:** Do you see what I'm saying?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yeah. Yeah. For your, you know, life, you know, if you think just your life only, you know, as a personal practice, you know, it doesn't make much sense. But if you see what we are doing—all human being doing—you know, that is exactly how we cause trouble for human being. You know, right foot or left foot, maybe Rinzai or Soto, or America or Soviet Union, or peace or war, you know. If you understand in that way this is big, big problem, and how you solve it is to walk on and on and on. *Hai.*

**Student M:** Do I understand you to say that the problem is how to be aware of all these opposites and polarities and precepts without being conscious of being aware? The consciousness sort of fixes things—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yeah.

**Student M:** —and that is not real either. It fixes the chain.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yeah. Chain will be, you know, fixed, and you cannot move, you know. But still you should move, you know. And time doesn't wait for you. So you should go on and on and on following the reality. If you think about this point, you already started to walk, you know. If you [are] just thinking about it, you know, it doesn't work, and you are not walking forward. But if you think, you know, "The world is going on and on. We are becoming older and older, you know. Today will not come again, and tomorrow I have to go to somewhere," you know. If you think in that way, you know, you cannot think same thing always, one after another. You should go on and on and on. At that time you do not—you cannot stop and thinking.

So anyway, you should go on and on and on, making best effort. When you make best effort, that is actually you are walking. So, you know, left foot sometime may be, you know, behind. Sometime may be forward—ahead. Sometime you feel as if you are doing something good, and sometime you feel as if you are doing something bad. But, you know, in that way, you are going on and on and on. That is, you have to accept it. If you have to accept it, and if you have to live on each moment, actually you are living on each moment. Then you should do something. You should say something. "Say something!" [pats the table with his hand three or four times gently] [laughs, laughter], a Rinzai master maybe say. "Say something now!" [hits the

table with his stick once for each syllable]. What do you say? That is, you know, the point.

**Student N:** Rōshi?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** *Hai.*

**Student N:** We have an expression in America: "Put your best foot forward." [Laughs.]

**Suzuki-rōshi:** "Best foot"?

**Student N:** That's what we say.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** *Ahh.*

**Student N:** Put your best foot forward. So maybe that's where we get hung up on it. We have to decide which of the two feet we are going to put out because that's the good foot.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** "Best foot forward"?

**Student N:** *Ahh.*

**Suzuki-rōshi:** "Best foot forward." [Laughter.]

**Student N:** Which means you only take one step, you know.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** And next time you may try to "best foot forward" again.

**Student N:** Then you'll hop [laughs].

**Suzuki-rōshi:** "Best foot forward." That is not actually what we are doing, I don't think, you know. We say, you know, *Ashiba motsureru*,<sup>3</sup> you know. By thinking, you know, if—when your feet does not go smoothly, you know, it means that you are involved in some idea, and, you know, *Ashiba motsureru*, you cannot walk smoothly. So if you, you know, if you try to make best foot forward always, your foot will be—will not go smoothly, I think. That will not be best way. I don't know, actually, what do you mean by "best foot forward"? So, this kind of teaching follows actual practice of zazen, you know, in everyday life, so that we can smoothly go [on] and on and on, we have this kind of idea. Without being caught by right foot of left foot. Right or wrong. Good or bad. Without confused, you know, disturbed way of footing—footwork. Smoothly you should go. That is our

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<sup>3</sup> *Ashiba* = foot; *motsureru* = tangled.

purpose of practice.

*Mmm.* I have no time any more. Excuse me.

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Source: City Center transcript entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997.  
Transcript checked against tape and made verbatim by Bill Redican  
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