

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
SESSHIN LECTURE, 7th DAY: PAGE STREET APPLES
Friday Morning
February 12, 1971
San Francisco

This is the seventh day of the *sesshin*, and you came already too far. So you cannot, you know, give up [laughs, laughter]. So only way is to stay here. And I feel I had a very good crop [laughs]. You may feel you are not yet ripened. But even though you are still ripening, but if you stay in our storehouse anyway, it will be a good apples [laughs]—Page Street apples, ready to be served [laughs, laughter]. So I have nothing to worry [about], and I don't think you have any more worry about your practice.

Perhaps some of you started *sesshin* because you have too many things to solve, or some of you must have thought if you come and sit here, maybe your problem will be solved. But, you know, the problem which you—which is—any—whatever problem it may be, something which is given to you could be solved anyway because Buddha will not give you anything—any more than you can solve and you need. Whatever it is, whatever problem it may be, the problem you have is just enough problems [laughs, laughter] for you.

So I think you should trust him, you know, just enough—not too much. And, you know—and his—if it is not too much, Buddha is ready to give you some more problems [laughs, laughter] just to survive, you know, just to appreciate problems. Buddha is always giving you something, because if you have nothing to cope with, you know, it may be terrible life—as if you are, you know, it is like—problem without life [life without problems] is to sit in this *zendō* for seven days without doing anything.

But, you know, I think you have had many problems to cope with in this *zendō*, or maybe more problems than you had in the city. You think it is easy to solve problem in *zendō* than in the city, but actually it is not so. You will find out more problems which you have had. But why you didn't feel so is you are fooled by something, and because of that you couldn't find out the problems you had. And if you do not, you know, know what kind of problem you have, the result will be terrible, you know. Unexpected problem will appear, you know, but it is not something which you didn't have, you know. Nothing will happen—no problem will happen if you do not have, you know—originally if you do not have problems. Because you had problem, only result came out when you did not expect it. So it is better to, you know, find out problems earlier—as soon as possible.

But in our practice, there is no need—you don't have to worry what will happen to us, because Buddha will give you, you know, just enough problems. I think that is, you know, to—to sit—we Sōtō students sit, you know, facing to the wall—in other word, facing to Buddha with your back-face [laughs]—back-front face and back-face [laughs]—I don't know how to say—how to express it, you know. You—you sit, you know, like this. Buddha is there [behind you],¹ and [you are] trusting him, you know. If you make some mistake, Buddha may say [laughing], "turn over." It means that you are involved in some dualistic problem, you know. You have some problem in the—in sense of duality, you know. So Buddha says, you know, "turn over."

And you should listen to him, you know [laughs]. But usually, if you trust him completely, you know, there is no need to face the Buddha. This is the attitude of complete trust, you know. Your enemies or some problems, you know, will, you know, come through the back, not from the, you know, the front. So to expose your back to the Buddha means to express the complete trust with Buddha.

And even though you have problem which you—you don't need, which you feel you don't need, or too much—which you feel [are] too much [of a] problem—problems, but trusting him, you should sit with problems. And, at the same time, you should be ready to refuse it if it is too much. But this will not be necessary, you know. There will not be no need to refuse it, because more and more the problems you think [are] problem will change into something you need.

So you know that, "If I refuse problem, I may regret. So I must keep—anyway I must keep this because I am not so sure if this is real problem or Buddha's help," you know. [Laughs.] "Maybe better to keep it." And you sit in this way, you know. "Okay. [Laughs.] Anyway, it will—we will understand what Buddha give—gave us." And Buddha may say, "If you really don't need it, any time I will accept it. [Laughs.] Give it back to me." But if Buddha say so, you may think, you know, "Oh, may be better [laughs, laughter] to keep it. There may be some meaning," you know, "in this problem. Oh, better to keep it." And you should sit. If you sit in this way, you will find various problems as a kind of valuable treasures which is indispensable for you and especially indispensable for Zen students.

So before you sit, before you accept yourself as you are, and before you—so—before you accept the problem you have, your position, you cannot sit in its true sense. But if you fix your mind, trusting him, and sit, then in it—there is no confusion or problems any more.

What you should do is to wait. Be patient enough and wait until the problem will make some sense to you, until you can appreciate your

¹ Words in brackets from original transcript (not on tape).

being here and your being—your position, whatever it is. That is how you practice zazen.

So if you only practice zazen, there is no need to expect Buddha to help you. Buddha is always helping you. But usually what we are doing is refusing Buddha's offer. For an instance, if you, you know, ask help—ask some special help from special person, you know, it means that you—you are refusing, you know, Buddha's offering and asking for some other things which is not here yet. So you are refusing him. You are refusing what you have already. And you are refusing to accept treasures you have.

You are like a pig, you know. When I was young, as my father was very poor, he raised many pigs. And if you give pigs a bucket of food, you know, if you are not there he will eat it. As long as you are there, he will not eat it, expecting me to give more food [laughs, laughter]. So you must be very careful. And you—if you put, you know, if you move, he will kick out the food from the bucket [laughs]. I think that is what you are doing, you know [laughs, laughter].

Just to cause more problem for you [laughs], you seek for something. But there is no need for you to seek for anything. You have plenty. And you have just enough problem. This is mysterious thing, you know—mystery of the life. We have just enough problem: not too much or not too little. So there is no need to ask something for anybody—there is no need to ask anyone's help if you are patient enough, if you are strong enough to accept it. But when you are not strong enough to accept you—accept problem, or strong enough to sit calmly and peacefully, trusting Buddha. Yeah, I said "trusting Buddha," you know [laughs]. I already give you the answer. Only way may be to trust Buddha, you know, to trust your being—why you are here, how you are here, you know. Because you are helped, and because the way you are helped is perfect, you exist here. If it is too much, you will die. If it is too little, you will die. You are, you know, receiving something, you know—as much as you need—just as much as you need. So only way is, you know, to trust him, or to trust your being here. That is, you know, spirit of Zen.

Zen master—you may think Zen master is—all the Zen master is very tough. [Thumps the ground and laughs.] It—he looks like very tough, you know, when you need him to be tough. [Thumps the ground and laughs.] But, you know, he is not tough—so tough. He is just tough enough for you, that's all! [Laughs, laughter.] Actually, you don't need your master if you really—if you know how to practice zazen.

It is already, you know, the last day. Perhaps if you have this kind of understanding, I think if you have problem still, you know, if you are blue apple yet [laughs]—blue or green apple—not blue [laughing,

ongoing laughter]—after being red, you will be blue. That is [?] too late. Maybe better than green—to stay green. If you feel you are still, you know, green, but, you know—even though you feel you are still green, you want—maybe you want to continue this *sesshin* more, I think [laughs]. I am so sure about it.

Last day will be the day for—to—to have—to make our practice meaningful, you know. How to make our practice meaning[ful] will be the—will be our schedule. So I want you just to sit, you know, and to be ready to go to market [as ripe apples], for—to be ready to be served for Zen students.

That is all what I wanted to say this morning. So let's, you know, sit more and—to have full appreciation of our practice.

Source: City Center transcript entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997.
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