

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
Sunday, August 15, 1971
Zen Mountain Center

When wind stops, flowers fall.
When a bird sings, mountain become more calm.

That is a kind of Zen poem. My translation is not so good. [He recites the poem in Japanese, saying each line twice.]

Kaze yande hana mae otsu.
Tori naitei yama sarani yūnari.

[Suzuki-rōshi is quoting two different (probably originally Chinese) poems, two verses from each poem in each of these two lines. The sound and tone of both poems is similar, which may be why Suzuki-rōshi recited both verses together. **Line 1:** Implied: (when); *Kaze* (wind); *yande* (stop); *hana* (flower); *mae* (before or already); *otsu* (dropped). **Line 2:** *Tori* (bird); *naite* (sing); *yama* (mountain); *sarani* (more); *yūnari* (calm).]

Kaze yande: When wind stops, but still flower falls. There is no wind. If there is no wind, flower should stay, but there is no wind, still flower falls. If a bird sings, it is not calm. But if you hear a bird sing in the remote mountain, you feel the calmness of the mountain more. *Tori naitei yama sarani yūnari.*

This poem again refers to the feeling of "there is" and "there is not." There is, and sometimes there is not. And there is not, sometimes there is [laughs]. When a flower falls, why flower falls is because there is wind. But when there is no wind, flowers still fall. And when you see a flower fall, you feel the wind, more than when wind is up. When a bird sings, you feel the calmness of the mountain more than when you did not hear any sound. That is true. Isn't that true?

That is real feeling of "there is" and "there is not." That is actual feeling. But usually we are involved in the idea of "there is" or "there is not." "There is not" means there is no wind. "There is no sound" means you don't hear anything—that is, there is no sound. But actually, when you hear sound you do not feel actual feeling of no sound. It is paradoxical, you may say, but that is much more true than your usual understanding of "there is" or "there is not." Much more true. *Kaze yande hana mae otsu. Tori naitei yama sarani yūnari.* You cannot say this is just a poem. This is actual reality.

When you have various things you eat, you become more hungry [laughs]. That is also true. There is, for us, "there is not." "There is not," for us, actually means there is. When there is not much food,

whatever you eat you will be satisfied with what you eat. Actually, you feel satisfaction of the things you have, when there is not so much. "There is not" is for us "there is," and "there is" for us "there is not much" [laughs] often.

That is very true for us. When that is very true for us, our thinking mind goes in another direction. That is why our practice is always confused [laughs]. On one hand, your feeling is very realistic and actual; on the other hand, your feeling is just logical. And it is ignoring actual feeling you have in our everyday life. No one knows which it is true. Both is true. There is something we should think about, right here.

Ummon [Ummon Bun'en (Yunmen Wenyan): 864-949. Ch'an master. Ummon's statement is from Case 6 of the *Pi-yen-lu (Blue Cliff Record)*.] one day asked our students: "I don't ask about fifteen days before. But how about fifteen days ahead?" That was his question. I don't ask you what has happened, actually, fifteen days before, or what has been—what has happened for fifteen days, but I am asking you what will happen from now? That was Ummon's question. No one could answer that question.

So Ummon said: "Every day is good day" [laughs]. That was his answer. Every day is a good day. Fifteen days, it has been good days—we have had good days for fifteen days, and we will have good days from now on. Every day is good day. That was Ummon's answer.

And what he means is, "Every day good day" means every day—his actual life of every day—includes both "there is" and "there is not." And he is satisfied with the idea of "there is" and the idea of "there is not." "There is something" is good; "there is nothing" is also good. But "there is," at the same time, does not mean there is nothing—actually there is something. But even though there is nothing, for him that is, "there is." Even though "there is," for him that is, "there is not" sometime.

Anyway, every day is good day for him. "There is" or "there is not," he doesn't care. "There is"—good. "There is" is good. And "there is not"—also good. Every day is good day. When you understand exactly what is "there is" and what is "there is not," then you have complete freedom from everything, and you can appreciate things in its true sense.

When there is no wind, still some flower like camellia falls. In the deep mountain, when you hear a bird, then you feel, all of a sudden, you feel, "Oh, how quiet mountain it is." Every day is a good day. Whatever happens to him, it is not just happening of something, or it is not just nothing happened. "Nothing happened," you say, but many things is happening. When something happens, you feel nothing. The feeling of nothing is happening in the great universe, including sun and the moon and bright stars you see in Tassajara valley. Actually when you see many stars, you will feel the vast emptiness of the sky. You are not just

watching stars, but you are feeling, actually, you feel the vastness of the sky.

In short, if you are always involved in the life of "there is" or "there is not," or enough or not enough, good or bad, right or wrong, you don't feel anything in its true sense. But when your mind is very calm, calm enough to see things which you do not actually see, when your mind is calmness, even though you see many things, you can appreciate the vastness being covered by something you see. Then you can appreciate things as it is. That is Ummon's "Every day is good day." "Every day is good day."

I put more emphasis on intellectual interpretation of our framework of Buddhist teaching, but more important thing is to have real feeling of practice.

Every day we practice zazen. In summer, morning zazen is good, very good, but evening zazen is also good. It is little bit hot, but after sitting, when you feel cool wind from outside, you may feel indescribable feeling of practice. Night zazen in this time of the year is supposed to be very hot because it is hot. But actual feeling you have in zazen in such a warm day—hot days—you have indescribable good feeling, which you cannot appreciate in spring or autumn. Feeling of the coolness is something more than you think about. Even though you know how good evening zazen is, but each time you sit you will feel, "Oh, good." [Laughs.] Every time you sit, your feeling will be refreshed because, I think, because it is hot. "It is hot" is not "it is hot," actually.

In monastery we do not have so good food [laughs] usually, and at Tassajara, as food is pretty strong and good, but not so tasty or it is very plain, I think. When you chew it—when you eat, you will feel real taste of the vegetables. If you cook with sugar and with too many spices [laughs], you cannot appreciate real taste of the food.

If the way of accepting things is simple, you can appreciate the things more. So we say:

*Jiki ni oite tō naru mono wa,
hō ni oitemo mata tō nari.*

[*Jiki* (food); *ni oite* (about); *tō* (absolute or equality); *naru* (become); *mono wa* (person), *hō* (dharma); *ni oitemo* (about); *mata* (also); *tō* (absolute or equality); *nari* (end-of-sentence marker). Suzuki-rōshi is referring to Dōgen-zenji's "Fushuku-hanpō" ("The Dharma for Taking Food"), from *Eihei (Dai)Shingi*, Line 1. See T. D. Leighton and S. Okumura, *Dōgen's Pure Standards for the Zen Community*, Albany: SUNY, 1996, p. 83. [See also SR-70-08-04.]]

Jiki is food.

If you can appreciate food,
you can appreciate dharma.

Jiki ni oite tō naru. Tō—do you know? Tō means "absolute." Jiki ni oite tō naru mono wa.

If you appreciate the real value of the absolute in food, you can appreciate dharma food: *Jiki ni oite tō naru mono wa, hō ni oitemo mata tō nari*. When your practice comes to this stage, you are said to be a good monk or a good student [laughs]. We say:

*Chōjō wa chōhosshin;
tanjō wa tanhosshin.*

[*Chō* (long) *jō* (meditating); *wa* (is or equals); *chō* (long) *hosshin* (buddha or *dharmakāya*); *tan* (short) *jō* (meditating); *wa* (is or equals); *tan* (short) *hosshin* (buddha or *dharmakāya*). Literally, "Long-sitting is long buddha; short-sitting is short buddha." Figuratively, "Sitting a long or short time, you can realize buddha-mind," or "Sitting is most important, even for a short time."]

Someone like Chuck is long buddha [laughs]. Someone like me is short buddha. *Chōjō wa chōhosshin, tanjō wa tanhosshin*. Short or long, good or bad, we say, we can appreciate things as it is, and we appreciate the value of each being. That is something what I referred to in last lecture. [SR-71-08-13]

So far, at Tassajara, we have been discussing, we have had discussion after discussion [laughs]: discussing about food, or rules, or many things—position. Why we did so is we cannot ignore idea of good and bad, long and short. But more and more as our students grow up, we must be able to appreciate things as they are. Bamboo is good, pine tree is good, oak tree is good, grass is good, darkness at night is good [laughs], frog is good. Everything should be good. That is "Every day is good day." And nothing is good—bare field is good. Dark vast sky is good. That is our actual feeling we should reach.

Maybe next have question and answer for fifteen minutes or so. Do you have some question? [Asides; laughter.] No question?

Student A (Dan Welch?): Rōshi, sometimes it seems easy to accept your words. But you often tell us that words are pointing at the moon.

Suzuki-rōshi: What I say—

Student A: Sometimes it seems that we can accept quite easily what you say. But maybe you don't live that long.

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh. Yeah. Maybe so. [Laughs, laughter.]

Student A: But seriously, I don't know what to say—

Suzuki-rōshi: That is why I could [laughs, laughter]. Yeah—because I say so, you accept it. When you say so, you die. It means that if you really have that kind of feeling, what I say is always true. But because actual practice, your actual practice is not always in that way—maybe it takes time to understand what I am saying.

But if my talk ends up in a kind of discussion, it doesn't make sense. We can have discussion any time. Discussion is good, but discussion will not solve the problem completely. What I am talking about right now is something you cannot reach by your mind, thinking mind, but it is something you can feel through practice—through real practice.

What is real practice and what is not? The point is, when you can forget yourself, then you have real practice. When your mind is always occupied by your small thinking mind or emotional mind or feeling or concepts, you cannot have real practice. Do you have some more question? *Hai*.

Student B: Today I was working, and a big fly was landing on my face. A fly. Sometimes I brushed it off. And today I got angry. And so I ... so I didn't feel bad. It was a good day, but it wasn't.... In that kind of situation, maybe you can give me some advice on what I could ... sometimes ... at other times ... Sometimes if I ... it turns warm—very hot.

Suzuki-rōshi: When you are not patient, when you become impatient, as you feel [reply from student; laughs], you don't feel so good. No—not always so. When you become impatient [laughs], of course you may make face. How about painting? Drawing—make some drawing of your impatient face on a paper when you have time. [Laughs, laughter.] [Student probably makes a face or draws one. SR is reacting to something with laughter.] Pretty good. May be very good Zen picture—Zen painting—if you are able to do it. And if you cannot do it, maybe Dan will do it [laughs]. Pretty good—not so bad.

But that you do not like your impatient face, that was not so good. If you are patient enough to work in the garden, then why don't you be little bit more patient—a little bit. It is too soon to say this is good or bad. This is "My practice is good or bad." You cannot say so easily because your practice will continue.

Student C: Getting upset with yourself—getting annoyed with yourself... if anything happens—

Suzuki-rōshi: Dualistic.

Student C: Its true it's dualistic, but if I face it I ...

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah, and because you say "dualistic," that is not so, actually. When it is happening it is not so. After you think about it, you feel dualistic.

Student C: [1-2 sentences unclear.]

Suzuki-rōshi: After. Yeah, that is not so good [laughs]. That is not so good. Your practice should continue and develop, moment after moment. Your firewood does not become ash. Ash is ash, and firewood is firewood. And that you are hot—that you work in the garden, even though there are many flies, even though sun is strong, that is your practice at that time, and that practice actually extended to the practice of this evening: our practice of *shikantaza*. That is why you have good feeling when you appear in zendō with white *tabi*, with people, and recite sūtra and make bow. You see? Your practice is going on and on and on.

Student C: When I started in the garden this spring I thought, if my understanding—I think I understand what you're saying. However, for some reason my mind is blank about what the ... of what happened. Sometimes I feel bad about what happened. But because I feel bad about what happened, I may be tongue-tied and... —not to do bad, whatever that is.

Suzuki-rōshi: That is another practice. To reflect on what you do is quite different practice than you had before in the garden. Refreshed practice. Of course there is some connection, but you are not actually continuing same practice. Same practice but, renewed practice. Not same but not different, we say. So you should understand in that way.

You should think about it, but you shouldn't stick to it. Why you shouldn't stick to it is it is renewed practice already, and that you feel bad is good. Who feels bad about it? Not your small mind, which was disturbed by flies, but it is by big mind—big mind thinks that was not good. So you have your practice at that time, practice of big mind. When you are

annoyed by flies, that was small-minded practice, but ... [*Sentence not finished. Tape turned over.*]

We say, if you fall down on the ground, you will stand up by the ground. Do you understand? If you fall—if you lose your practice because of the annoyance you have with flies, you will stand up by the same annoyance. Because when you say "I was annoyed by flies and that was not good practice," then already you stood up, because you have big mind already. Do you understand?

So it is okay, even [laughs] you don't have to be concerned about it so much—about your bad practice so much. But to be concerned about it is good, because it is a practice of big mind. If you fall on the ground you will stand up by the same old ground. If you say "My practice is not good," you are not standing already like this. So because of this same old problem, you can stand up.

So if you are enlightened about delusion, you are enlightened person. If you are deluded as your enlightened mind, that is delusion. Do you understand? If you say "My practice was not good," then that is enlightenment. It is not problem of what you did is good or bad, but problem of actual practice you have right now—actual mind you have right now. If the actual mind you have right now is big mind, that is is enlightenment. Okay? You don't have to be concerned about what you did before, but you have to [laughs] because you have to stand up. But when you think that was wrong, that is already cleared up. You could cut off the delusion you have. You have not delusion any more. You are not deluded any more. *Ahhh*. Does it make sense? Okay? *Hai*.

Student D: If you're being bitten—

Suzuki-rōshi: Hmm?

Student D: If you're being bitten, say, by a fly or whatever it is, and you smack that fly you just think that—you don't think about it—the fly is on the ground dead [laughter]. ...the way you are.

Suzuki-rōshi: Hmm?

Student D: Don't think about it. Go right on with whatever you're doing. You don't inflict upon it the anguish of something.

Suzuki-rōshi: Different?

Student D: You don't think about it any way at all.

Suzuki-rōshi: You will think—you will feel in some way. It is not possible not to feel—not to have any feeling about it. But what kind of

feeling you have is the point.

Student D: Well, when I did this I didn't... whatever it was just died, and afterwards I thought, well maybe it just died that way [laughter, comments by other students].

Suzuki-rōshi: Is it true with almost everyone? Do you agree [laughs] with his way?

Student E: Let's kill Alan. [Possibly Alan Marlowe, suggesting that Student D was Alan.] [Laughter.]

Suzuki-rōshi: Huh?

Student F: Suzuki-rōshi, what if we smack him and then stomp on him? [Probably referring to the way insects were treated in the student's (largely inaudible) questions.] [Laughter.]

Suzuki-rōshi: What kind of reaction do you have? [Laughter.]

Student F: Like a blade of grass to become a buddha.

Suzuki-rōshi: Hmm?

Student F: Grass—blade of grass to become a buddha.

Suzuki-rōshi: Ohh. [Laughs.] This is famous statement of Dōgen: Even though you do not like grass, grass will grow quite easily. Even though you like flower, life will—flower will fall [laughs]. That is actual reality. Even though it is so, if you are stung by mosquito or horsefly, you will do this [gesturing?] [laughs]. You will do this, maybe. But when you are involved in very serious practice, you wouldn't. Even though mosquito comes, you will be sitting, and until you may have many mosquitoes, like small ... [laughs]—big They will sting us, but not only sting, but also they suck blood from us. More and more they will become like small fruits or something [laughs, laughter]. They cannot fly any more [laughs, laughter—maybe gesturing]. But you will still be sitting. And then you have to be careful when you stand up, not to step on mosquitoes [laughs].

So you feel calm to ... "Oh, he came." And as soon as he came with his legs and his—what do you call it—his pipe or something [laughs, laughter]—needle [laughs]—

Student: Straw.

Suzuki-rōshi: Hmm?

Student: Straw.

Suzuki-rōshi: Straw. [Laughs, laughter.] —you feel his straw coming. Straw. Mouth. Straw. First legs; next straw; and straw [laughs] come in and come out like this [probably gestures], and while they are continue this for several moments, they stop and start to suck, until they become like this [probably gestures]. And they cannot fly because they are so heavy.

When your practice is completely involved in big mind, you don't care. But usually, for instance, when a bug or big horsefly come [slaps self], I will do like this. But what I feel is different. But whatever feeling I have, if something has happened already, you cannot do anything. Even though it was bad—it is not okay, but [laughs] we cannot do anything about it, so you have to think on it—how do you say?—you have to make reflection.

How you feel is the point. If you feel bad, that is good. It is not impossible to feel good or bad unless you make some excuse. But to make some excuse is very small mind. So don't make any excuse. Don't try to make any excuse for what you have done. If it is wrong, "I am sorry." If it is good, then you will say "maybe so," but you shouldn't feel completely satisfied with your practice. You should go on and on. *Hai*.

Student G: What about if you know it's wrong and you do it anyway?

Suzuki-rōshi: Huh?

Student G: What about if you know it's wrong and you do it anyway?

Suzuki-rōshi: When you do it anyway?

Student G: Yeah. You did so in a way that you know it in a minute.

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh.

Student G: But you—

Suzuki-rōshi: You did it anyway.

Student G: —you do it anyway.

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh. Do you mean you did it because you have to—had to?

Student G: I don't live in ...

Suzuki-rōshi: Anyway, it is very difficult to understand exactly. Without

thinking, do you mean? Anyway—

Student G: No, with thinking.

Suzuki-rōshi: Hmm?

Student G: —with thinking.

Suzuki-rōshi: With thinking—

Student G: Yes.

Suzuki-rōshi: —and not completely. "Anyway, I will do it." That is not so serious. That is, I don't think, serious—not serious now. In your practice, yeah, we shouldn't do things just anyway. "Okay, I will do it anyway." Sometime it is good. Without giving responsibility of doing to somebody, taking the responsibility of doing for yourself. "I will do it anyway." You don't have to say this way or that way. If it is bad, "that is my fault"; if it is good, "because you helped me, I did it." "But anyway I did it." This kind of "anyway" is very good. "But I don't know what we should do. Anyway I will do it"—that is not so good. But when you are in some situation where you should do something, then you will do it anyway. "Whether it is good or bad, someone must do it. So anyway I will do it." That is also "anyway." "I don't know what will happen to us, but anyway I will go and find out." That is also "anyway." There must be many "anyways." [Laughs, laughter.]

As you are mostly young, so I think your practice should not be old man's practice. You should confront problems you have, for you.

Do you have some questions, some more question? One more please.
Hai.

Student H: [6-10 sentences unclear.]

Suzuki-rōshi: Hmm. Actually, that cannot be serious question [laughs]. You know the answer already, perhaps, but you don't know what to do. That is why you ask me, isn't that so? You know.

Student H: Well, I know—I know that I ... but I ...

Suzuki-rōshi: Maybe I have some good answer? [Laughs, laughter.] No, I am sorry I haven't [laughs]. I don't have so good answer for that. But my answer will be, it's a good chance for you to have that kind of problem. Because of that kind of problem, we can practice our way. It is good to have some problem. This is too much to say, but if we are cats or dog we have no problem, so we don't have to practice [laughs]. We are happy in our problem. So that is not problem just for you. Everyone

has same problems, actually. So as long as you live in this land of Shākyamuni Buddha you have that problem—or live in the human world, you have that problem.

In Buddhist tradition, this world is Nansenbushū, the south side of the Mount Sumeru. [*Nan* (Jap.) = "south." Also Nan'enbudai, the "Jumbū (San. Jumbūdvipa) continent in the south." According to Hindu/Buddhist cosmology, four continents (*shishū*) lie at the bottom of the ocean in the four cardinal directions arranged around Mt. Sumeru (Meru), the "world mountain" at the center of the universe. *Nansenbushū* is the continent lying to the south.] On the opposite side there is Hokkuroshū, where there is no problem [laughs]. [*Hoku* (Jap.) = "north." Also Uttarakuru (San.). Hokkuru lies to the north of Mt. Sumeru. Its occupants live for 1000 years amidst a variety of pleasures.] There is enough water to drink, and no cold and similar things, and enough juice and various foods you enjoy; there is no problem. People live long time—people do not die. If you are born in that kind of place, you have more pleasure, and we have no Buddhism or no practice. That is very... But it suggest some truth.

So your question is based on the idea of understanding of our life. "If our life is full of happiness and joy, that is good life; if our life is full of suffering and problem, that is not good life." That is a very superficial understanding of life. And most people's view of life is based on that kind of idea of good or bad, which is not deep enough, which is not real enough.

So when you have that kind of problem, you should think of why you have problem when you have problem, when you are able to think about it. When you are angry you cannot think, of course. But when you are not—when your mind is calm, you should think about the foundation of your view of life—understanding of life. And it is good to listen to some teaching like Buddhism. We do not talk about sin, but we talk about suffering and problem of life. And it is not possible to leave—to get out of suffering and to have life of no problem, according to our understanding of human life.

Thank you very much.

Source: City Center transcript by Barry Eisenberg. Entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997. Checked against tape by Bill Redican, 9/25/00. Miyagawa Keishi-san kindly provided assistance with the translation of Japanese terms, particularly the verses on Pages 1 and 3–4. Lightly edited for readability by Gordon Geist (01/27/07).