

**Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi**  
**Thursday Morning, August 18, 1966**  
**RECONSTRUCTION OF THE LECTURE**  
**FROM THE SECOND ZAZEN PERIOD**  
**(BEFORE MORNING SERVICE)**  
**Lecture A**  
**Soko-ji Temple, San Francisco**

*[This tape is not in Suzuki-rōshi's voice. It is a transcript of a post-hoc reconstruction of the lecture by the tape operator (believed to be Richard Baker).]*

**Tape operator:** As I've said already, this machine has an idiosyncratic quality of—if you don't—[if] the buttons aren't pressed right it doesn't record clearly, and the last, say, fourth or fifth—fifth or sixth—actually last ten minutes of that, I guess, of Suzuki-rōshi's lecture this afternoon was lost, except for the very last portion which—because he started talking again—I turned the machine off, and when I turned it back on it started to record properly.

Most of what is lost was a translation from *Shushōgi* by Dōgen-zenji—I think *Shushōgi*.<sup>1</sup> *[Tape recorded turned off and restarted.]*

This morning, Thursday morning, at 6—well, at the second period of meditation, the period before the morning service, Suzuki-rōshi gave a lecture which was lost because I didn't tape it. It was too difficult to set up and get it done, and it interrupts what he says. But I've written it down.

The first part is a reconstruction, and the second part is—I wrote it down as he was saying it. I will—wait, wait—I begin with the reconstruction. This—this was—this was given to us during zazen.

**[I. RECONSTRUCTION OF THE LECTURE FROM THE SECOND PERIOD OF MEDITATION, August 18, 1966]**

This the fourth day—the first three days—this is the fourth day of our *sesshin*, if I can read my handwriting. This is the fourth day of our *sesshin*. We have—the first three days, we have had a pretty difficult time. You have had some experiences—maybe some good experiences. Now let us polish up on our experience in the last two days.

---

<sup>1</sup> It was probably Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* "Sokushin-zebutsu," which was translated and discussed in other lectures during this *sesshin*.

We have been like a group of blind men around a large elephant.<sup>2</sup> Some—some will think it is a tree, some a court [*sic*]. The purpose of my lecture—why we give you a lecture is to destroy your partial understanding of the elephant. You each have your own way of understanding your practice by yourself—or, rather, you understand practice in your own terms. This is not bad, but it is why we must give you some lecture in order to destroy the partial understanding of you—yours- [partial word]—that you come at by understanding it in your own terms. That is the meaning of "to polish up your practice"—to find the actual meaning of your experience—to know the whole elephant. You will be surprised by what is—what it is, the whole elephant, when you find out.

## [II. CONTEMPORANEOUS TRANSCRIPTION]

**Tape operator:** Now, from here on are the actual words as I wrote them down as he finished this talk. It was in the dark, so it's going to be harder to read.

**Attributed to Suzuki-rōshi:** If you find out true great elephant, you will be amazed at sight of the elephant.

**Tape operator:** Oh, that—I repeated that. This is exact- [partial word]—this is actually what he said:

**Attributed to Suzuki-rōshi:** You find—if you find out true great elephant, you will be amazed at sight of elephant.

"To polish up your experience" means to find out true meaning, or—polish—yeah, experience—means to find out true meaning of your particular experience, and then your actual experience to know—and through your actual experience to know what is an elephant is our actual practice.

Buddhism is like an ocean, we say. If you get into it, the more you—the more you go, the more it will—the more you will find how deep is the ocean of Buddhism. This is how we study Buddhism through our practice. We should know the meaning of zazen, and we should continue the kind of eff- [partial word]—this kind of effort—we should continue this kind of effort to experience the bottom ocean of Buddhism—the—to experience the bottomless ocean of Buddhism. We should be—we should be something [i.e., an illegible word] through-and-through 'til we forget ourselves. We should be something

---

<sup>2</sup> Dōgen made passing reference to this famous parable in *Fukan Zazen-gi*. It appears in many sources: an early version is found in the *Udāna-sūtra* (VI, 4), in which Shākyamuni Buddha recites the tale. It is also found in the *Dīgha Nikyāya* (19), and the *Nirvāna-sūtra*.

through-and-through 'til we forget ourselves in depth of Buddhism—  
through and through 'til we forget ourselves in depth of Buddhism.

Let's relax and sit two days more.

Thank you very much.

Let's relax and sit two days more.

Thank you very much.

**Tape operator:** Um. That's the end of this morning's lecture during the second zazen period before morning service. Coming up after this is the 6 pm lecture on Thursday by Suzuki-rōshi.<sup>3</sup> Bishop Sumi<sup>4</sup> went back to Los Angeles this morning. Thank you.

---

Source: Original City Center tape. Verbatim transcript by Adam Tinkham and Bill Redican (6/7/01).

---

<sup>3</sup> SR-66-08-18-C.

<sup>4</sup> Sumi Togen: Head or bishop of the Sōtō Zen School in America, starting in 1965. Formerly an instructor of monks at Sōji-ji monastery in Japan.