

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
Sunday Morning, August 25, 1968¹
San Francisco

This morning I want to continue the explanation of the ten powers. This —those ten powers are that of bodhisattva's ten powers.²

One is the devotion to the Buddha's teaching and no attachment to anything else. The second one is increasing one's devotion. The third is expedient ability to instruct people and alter their conduct. The fourth one is understanding what people think. And fifth is satisfying people with what they want. And sixth—unceasing [no cessation] of exertion. The seventh one including all vehicles or all teaching—teachings without abounding—aban- [partial word]—without giving-up Mahāyāna way—Mahāyāna way. The eighth one is mysterious power of showing the appearance of the Buddha in every world in each pores of—pores of the body. The ninth—ninth is making people turn towards Buddhism and leading people to perfection. The last one is satisfying all kinds of men with even a single phrase. Those are ten powers.

I explained last—yesterday the first one and the second one, and the last one—satisfying all kinds of men with even a single phrase. Ninth one—or eighth one, the mysterious power of showing the appearance of the Buddha in each world, in each pores of the body. And second one, yeah —and the first one, devotion to the Buddha's teaching and no attachment to anything. This is our practice, which cannot compare with any other activities we have or any other effort we make.

So—and all that we do or all that we think is not absolute itself, you know. So there is no reason why we should attach to it. The only thing we should observe is as a absolute is the emptiness, you know, which is the absolute in its true sense, which is quite different from somethingness, you know [laughs]. All what you do is somethingness [laughs], and you cannot understand emptiness. So that is why it is called emptiness.

And emptiness is, in usual activity, is not the goal of practice or purpose of activity or aim of activity. This much I explained. The only way to realize the absolute is through our practice—through—in its true sense.

And I explained the eighth one: the mysterious power of showing the

¹ This date is probably incorrect. Earlier (July 21, 1968) Suzuki-rōshi mentioned that he had already explained the ten powers of a bodhisattva. So this lecture was probably given sometime earlier in July of 1968.

² This version of the ten bodhisattva powers follows very closely the *Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, Daitō Shuppansha, 1965 (p. 153, under *jūriki*, Section II).

appearance of the Buddha in each world in each pores of body—of the body. That is actually, you know, zazen practice. Another, you know—this is actually the explanation of our *shikantaza*. When you, you know, practice zazen in its true sense, actually you are Buddha himself, and in each pore of—pores of your body you have so many worlds [laughs]. And in that world each of the world—worlds, there is Shākyamuni Buddha. This is explanation of our *shikantaza*.

And when you, you know, practice our way as a one unified activity, mind and body, and each parts of your body from the end of your nail to the [laughs] tip of your head—top of your head. And I always explain how you do it, you know: That is to—to have right posture. Having some strength here [probably pointing to *hara*], and having perfect *mudrā* here, like this, and you feel as if you are trying to open your arm little bit. This way. And when you do this, on the contrary, you sh- [partial word]—you know—your arm, you know—open your—you open your arm, and on the contrary you pull your neck—pull your chin and stretch your neck as if you are supporting something on your head. And you have strength here, especially when you inhale. In other word, your inhaling comes to the bottom of your tummy. At that time you, you know, you feel as if you are opening your arms. Actually it shouldn't move, but [by?], and you should pull your neck. And when you exhale, without losing your power here in your tummy or putting some more power in your tummy, you exhale.

So your mind pervade all over your body. And all the parts of your body are participating one activity. So we say [one word unclear]—Dōgen-zenji says in his instruction, *Gotsu—Gotsugotsu toishite zajō*.³ *Gotsugotsu toishite* means "like a mountain," you know, which one your body should be, like a one big mountain. And he said "think non-thinking—think non-thinking," you know. When you do this, you cannot think, you know. So—but your mind is pervading every parts of your body. So that is "think non-thinking," not usual thinking in term of good or bad. But your mind is everything and is every parts of your body. When you think in that—when you practice zazen in that way, figuratively speaking, manifesting the Buddha in each world, in every pore of your body, that much I explained yesterday.

[*Aside.*] Would you bring me that blackboard? The other side.

[*Speaking from blackboard. Sounds like he is writing or drawing on it.*] That stage, you know, you are assuming your zazen practice is perfect,

³ *Gotsu* is repeated for emphasis. It means "high and level," "lofty," or "motionless." Its original connotation was to a table mountain—i.e., something imposing and balanced (Nishijima and Cross, *Shōbōgenzō*, Vol. 2, p. 91). *Gotsu* is a key term in the exchange between Yakusan and a monk on thinking non-thinking, which Dōgen cites in *Shōbōgenzō* "Zazenshin" as well as *Fukan Zazen-gi*.

you know [laughs, laughter]. That stage is definitely [taps blackboard].⁴ [3-5 words unclear] white—white is relative. Each part of your body or mind—or you say "mind or body." That is relative—relative, and relative unified with absolute—with the absolute—the relative unified with the absolute. Where you have one soul or unity of practice. This is—oh—and—this is—excuse me—this is—this is blackboard [laughs, laughter]. This is black, this is white, as you see [laughs, laughter]. But for me [laughs], this is white and this is black [laughter]. Black, you know, signify the absolute, you know, and white signify the relative. This is nighttime. This is daytime. Nighttime you cannot see anything, you know, but daytime you will see everything in its relative sense. But absolute—you don't see, you don't hear, you don't think. That is the absolute.

So when—when you one with your practice, one is black, or here. When you—when your everyday activity become one with black, then that is the stage [*returns from blackboard*] when—when manifestation of black or the absolute—this is the realization of bud- [partial word]—black. [*Returns to blackboard.*] Although there is black and white, those are two sides of the one coin. If you see from front, it may be the black—black, here, you know. It should be all black, but it—to make some distinction from here, we use this symbol. But this actually black, and this is white. And this is the absolute, and this is the relative. And this are—those things is the stage you [*returns from blackboard*] acquire by the practice of *shikantaza*. [*Returns to blackboard.*]

And there is also some difference in the way of practice—in the w- [partial word]—in Rinzai and Sōtō. Sōtō puts emphasis on this one [white, relative] [taps blackboard], rather [?], and Rinzai puts emphasis on this one [black, absolute]. So Rinzai puts emphasis on enlightenment, you know, black, and we put emphasis on [*returns from blackboard*] the each part of the body, you know, which participate with the practice of the absolute. So that is why we, you know—we concerned about *mudrā* or posture or every form or manner of your activity.

So we put emphasis on white in everyday activity or each part of your body or mind. But Rinzai puts emphasis on the black, which is the perfect enlightenment. But perfect enlightenment—realization of perfect enlightenment is possible when each part of your body, you know, work together and attain oneness of each part—each—every parts—every part. But there is actually—there is no difference when you attain it.

And now—here I must explain the third power: the expedient ability to instruct people and alter their conduct. This is, you know, this stage

⁴ Suzuki-rōshi appears to be referring to Tōzan's five ranks or degrees of enlightenment (*go-i*). The first stage is concerned with the absolute and the relative.

[returns to blackboard and points]—especially this one. *[Returns from blackboard.]* Expedient ability. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, expedient is more important, you know, rather than the original way, or black, or the absolute. Without, you know, relative, the absolute does not mean anything [laughs], you know—emptiness, just emptiness. And actually when you say "just emptiness," that is not—that is idea of emptiness, not actual emptiness. When we attain emptiness by all parts of our body, that is real emptiness, you know, actual emptiness. When everything exist in its own way and express—and express the absolute, you know, we call it a true emptiness.

So emptiness—because of somethingness, emptiness makes sense. So we rather put emphasis on somethingness or everyday activity without sticking to some idea of emptiness. But it is, you know, interesting to talk about emptiness, you know [laughs, laughter]. Whatever you say, that is emptiness [laughs], you know. If you have good friend to talk about emptiness, you know, you can talk about the emptiness whatever you like [laughs]. Whatever you say, that is emptiness [laughs, laughter]. And you can enjoy the discussion of emptiness [laughs, laughter]. But—but that is not, you know, the emptiness we mean [laughs, laughter]. But this kind of understanding helps, you know, our study, of course. And we should not say, you know, you should not write anything about Buddhism or talk anything about Buddhism.

Whatever you say, that is not emptiness itself but it is the good expedient or good devices, you know. To instruct people—expedient ability to instruct people and alter their conduct. If someone is too rigid, or someone is too—is person [partial?] to some idea of emptiness, or relative, or some kind of teaching, we can correct their understanding by the expedience. So whatever the teaching are, those teaching are just good devices. And good devices is very important. And to have power of good devices is one of the important point for us. And to—so whatever you do, that activity should be good devices to instruct people [laughs]. You should be good example of—example for the people.

So expedient ability. Why you will—you have expedient ability is because you do not think that what you are doing is the absolute itself. You know this is expedient. But this is something which you should do with kindness—with the same mercy as Buddha's mercy. That is the actual power we have as a Zen student.

So—but this expedient or good devices is not usual devices, you know. This is the devices—this is old activity. Each activity which we do moment after moment, that is—all what you do is good devices. And to express and realization of the absolute—in this—when you understand the third power in this way, this is nothing different from the ninth one— or—oh, eighth one—mysterious power of showing the appearance of the buddhas in every world in each pores of the—in each pore of the body.

You know, the meaning is the same.

And I think I—I explained the fourth one, which is understanding what people think. Or satisfying the fifth one is satisfying people with what they want. When you are doing something with calmness of your mind, with good concentration, without being involved in any prejudice, or without sticking to your own viewpoint, then you know things—you see things as it is. So you know—so you know what people want, like Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. So satisfying people with what they want, this power naturally will appear.

And the sixth one: no cessation of exertion. And this no cessation of exertion take place when the tenth power—when you obtain the tenth power, which is satisfying all kinds of men with even a single phrase. And devotion to the Buddha's teaching, and no—and no attachment to anything—to anything. You know, when—when you devote yourself to your practice, you will have—you will have the power of understanding through everything and through various teaching—verbal teaching and non-verbal teaching.

So you will have incessant practice when you—because you hear—because you see—observe the truth through verbal or—and non-verbal things. You increase your devotion, and because you—in this way, strengthen in your devotion, you will hear everything as Buddha's teaching. So in this way, back and forth, you will practice our way endlessly and, as Dōgen-zenji said, without any trace of it, you know, this kind of practice will continue. This kind of pure practice will continue forever, endlessly. This is the power we obtain through our practice.

The seventh is including all vehicles—all the teachings without abandoning the Mahāyāna. The Mahāyāna teaching, in its wide sense—our teaching—our teaching in its wide sense is everything in its wide sense. In its narrow sense, teaching is something which was told by some sage. That is the teaching in its narrow sense. But in its wide sense, everything is the teaching for us: the color of the mountain, the sound of the river, or sound of the motorcar [laughs] even [is] a teaching of Buddha. We understand in this way.

So including all teaching, without abandoning the Mahāyāna. When we understand our way, and when we practice our way, we cannot, you know—whatever teaching you observe, that is our teaching—our Mahāyāna teaching. So you cannot, you know [laughs], abandon Mahāyāna way—our way. When you have true understanding of our practice, that is including all vehicles, without abandoning the Mahāyāna vehicle.

Those are the ten powers.

When we understand our teaching or our practice in this way, actually there is no teaching or no Buddhism [laughs], because whatever you do, that is Buddhism itself. But it does not mean, you know—but it does not mean if, you know, everything is Buddhism there is no need to practice our way [laughs]. That is wrong understanding. We can—only when we get through those, you know, practices [?] we can teach this understanding.

At first, this one [apparently moves toward a blackboard away from the mike] is a kind of belief, you know. For the beginner this is the kind of belief. And for the people who get through all those stages, it is the accomplishment—actual accomplishment. And so, to some extent, when you want to practice zazen it is necessary to have some belief or, you know, or understanding of our way—understanding with, you know, complete understanding so that you can believe in it. When there is no doubt in those explanation of the teaching, you can believe in it, you know, even though that is not—the understanding is not perfect—I mean, not "perfect," you know—you understand completely, but when you understand it, you know, completely, you will find out this is just intellectual understanding. So I have to actually obtain [?] those teaching in its true sense—not only intellectual understanding, but also emotionally and—and until I have no doubt with it—until we can intuitively—[have the] intuition to know what is our way. Then that is—in this way you will extend your way until it comes to here [starts to write or point with chalk]. So starting from here then you start practice and attain this attainment in its true sense, where there is no Buddhism [laughs]—no Buddhism. Because you completely have it, you know. No nose, no ears, no nose, no eyes—because you haven't. You do not aware of your ears, you know. Even though you don't know—you do not aware of your ear, you hear something. When you see something, [that] which you see is something, you know, which exist outside. But [laughs] you cannot see your own eye.

So our practice should be like this, you know. You should not [be] aware of your practice. That is—in Hīnayāna school, that is the fourth stage you will attain, where there is no feeling of practice—no feeling of your body or mind, no feeling of suffering, or no feeling of joy. You are just practicing without any problem [laughs]—without any pain. That is the fifth stage.⁵

And those—all those ten powers could be this one [points to blackboard], could be this one, and so on. But to make our understanding clear, or so that we can devote ourselves to the true practice, this kind of analysis is helpful.

We have been studying same thing [laughs], you know, over and over

⁵ Tōzan's fifth rank: *ken-chu-to*, in which form and emptiness fully interpenetrate, and self-evident, intentionless activity arises.

again—sometime by *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, sometime by five ranks, sometime by ten powers. But actually, that is various explanation of zazen power. And if you extend our understanding, you will understand everything in the most meaningful way—the most adequate way. That adequate way is called "middle way," you know. The most appropriate way. And you will do something which is necessary when it is necessary, in the most adequate, appropriate way [laughs]. This is very difficult, you know. This is very difficult practice. This is—someone who can do this kind of activity, this kind of—who can observe—who can do things in this way is good priest [laughs], good student.

But when you have—when you do not understand this kind of teaching, you will not find good teacher, you know. You will ignore him [laughs], even though very best teacher is right here, like me [laughs, laughter]. No—I don't think so [laughing]. You will ignore it: "He is talking [about] same thing over and over."

No- [partial word]⁶—he is now sick, and several of our students met him when they went to Japan. And—yeah, mostly because—he doesn't speak English, you know. So it was rather hard to communicate. So student could not acknowledge his practice. But I thought what they will find something from him. I don't know whether they found some valuable teaching from him or not. But unfortunately he is sick now. And there are many good well-known and unknown teachers, which is—who understand this kind of secret.

And it takes time, you know, until you actually practice our way and extend our way in our everyday life. So there is no reason—no reason why you—why you should try to attain something. Anyway, to continue our practice, you know, without giving up [laughs], that is the most important thing for you.

Thank you very much.

Source: City Center original tape. Verbatim transcript by Adam Tinkham and Bill Redican (10/18/01).

⁶ Suzuki-rōshi is probably referring to (Kojun) Noiri-rōshi, a fellow disciple of Kishizawa Ian-rōshi.