

## **Shunryu Suzuki Lecture from the April, 1965 Wind Bell (based on student notes)**

### **MODEL SUBJECT NO. 84 FROM THE BLUE CLIFF RECORDS**

The Hekigan Roku, translated into English by R.D.M. Shaw under the title of The Blue Cliff Records, is a famous collection of 100 koan stories compiled by Setcho Juken (A.D. 980-1052), who added an "Appreciatory Word" to each one. A later Zen Master, Engo Kokugon (A.D. 1063-1135) added his "Introductory Word" as a kind of Preface to each Main Subject. The following is a translation and commentary of Main Subject No. 84 by Reverend Suzuki.

### **YUIMA'S "THE DOCTRINE OF ATTAINING NON-DUALITY"**

This Model Subject is about the Yuimakyo (the Vimalakirti-nirdesa Sutra). This sutra is as famous as the Shomangyo (the Srimalasinhanada Sutra). Both sutras relate stories reputed to have taken place during the time of Sakyamuni Buddha, and both have great Mahayanistic spirit. The hero of the Yuimakyo, Yuima, was a "koji" (a householder or lay Buddhist), while the heroine of the Shomangyo was a daughter of King Hashinoku (prasenajit) and empress of a king in a neighboring country. She became an adherent of Buddhism and received "juki" (recognition as one who will achieve Buddhahood), and gave her people a sermon about Mahayana Buddhism in the presence of Buddha.

When Yuima was ill, Buddha told his disciples and Bodhisattvas to visit him in his sickbed, but no one could accept the order because they had had a bitter experience with the lay Buddhist before. And his illness was a very unusual one: he was suffering the suffering of all sentient beings.

Monju bosatsu (Manjusri), the Bodhisattva of the Zendo (Zen practice hall), at last came to visit him accompanied by thirty-one fellow Bodhisattvas. Monju bosatsu found Yuima in a large vacant room. When he asked what Yuima's illness was, Yuima said that he was suffering from the same illness of all sentient beings and because sentient beings suffer he suffers. He said that he wanted to provide a perfect remedy for all who suffer from ignorance and passion. After asking questions and giving answers to each other, they revealed how to attain a true understanding of the non-duality of phenomena.

To these two typical Mahayana sutras and to Myohorengekyo (the Saddharma-Pundarika Sutra), the famous Japanese prince Shotoku (574-622) who built Horyuji, (the oldest wooden temple in the world), wrote a commentary and delivered lectures to the Empress Suiko. This is regarded as one of the three best commentaries in India, China, and Japan. The prince set up the constitution of old Japan based for the first time on the spirit of those sutras.

The ninth section of Yuimakyo is entitled "Doctrine of entering into non-duality", and this is also the title of our Model Subject No. 84.

## **Introductory Words:**

Introducing Engo says: There is nothing to be decided upon as right (unattachment) or wrong (non-discrimination). If we get away from right or wrong and forget all about attaining or losing, we will become utterly naked and independent. Now what is in front of us and what is behind us? Some monk may come out and say: In front of us there are the Worship Hall and the Temple Gate, and behind us there are the Sleeping Room and Sitting Room of the head priest (Hojo). Can you tell me that this monk has open eyes or not? If you can, I will allow you to see men of old (Yuima and Monju).

## **Note:**

"Hojo": Literally "Hojo" means a ten-foot square room in Chinese or Japanese. It now means the sitting room of the resident monk or priest. Sometimes we address the resident monk or priest himself as "Hojo." The source of this Zen Buddhist custom originated in a very dramatic story about Yuima of this subject, a story which likewise can be found in the Vimalakirti Sutra. Yuima is said to have been living in a ten-foot square hut in Vaisali and at one time would have accepted 32,000 guests in it! (32,000 means innumerable or all sentient beings; in his room Yuima suffered their suffering).

"Oneness of duality": This doctrine is the essential teaching of Buddhism. Oneness and duality are two sides of one reality. Reality has two inseparable sides like a paper-slide picture. Both the reading side for a teacher and the watching side for children are needed. If one side is set apart from the other, it is no longer a paper-slide picture. One side of Reality is diversity, and the other side of it is universality. When universality reveals itself in the diversity of phenomena, then we have universal validity which at the same time has the deepest personal meaning. Universal truth is perceived as unique and personal to yourself alone. Enlightenment is the acceptance of all teachings as if they were only for you yourself. From this acceptance springs a great gratitude to all the Buddhas.

Above the earth there is sky, below the sky there is earth. In the light there is darkness, in darkness light. The sun shines on the moon, and the moon reflects the sunshine. The good exists because of the bad; the bad exists because of the good. There is nothing good or bad by itself. If you have understood what is good, you have understood what is bad. The good is something you want to do, and the bad is something you do not want to do. Once having decided to do or not to do something, it is what you actually do that counts. Within this comprehensive understanding of reality, everything that exists will in its true sense be the aim of your activity and will encourage your practice.

**Main Subject:**

Attention! Yuimakitsu (Vimalakirti) asked Manjusri: "What is the Bodhisattva's doctrine of attaining non-duality?"

Manjusri said: "In my mind, for each doctrine there should not be any word, any verses, any interpretations or any understandings. This is the true entrance to the doctrine of non-duality, and all discussion about it makes no sense. This is the doctrine of attaining non-duality."

Then Monju asked Yuimakitsu: "Each one of us already has finished giving our interpretations; what is your explanation of this doctrine of the oneness of duality?"

(Here Setcho said: "What did Yuima say? Did you understand?" Setcho was the compiler of the Blue Cliff Records.)

Each one of the Bodhisattvas had tried their interpretations on the supreme doctrine of non-duality. When Yuima was asked to give some interpretation to the doctrine, he did not say anything about it. None of the other interpretations were better than the silence of Yuima.

If you understand this Model Subject in this way only it may not be perfect, because Yuima's silence was not just to keep his mouth still. Setcho was very kind to us just to leave this point to our own effort, so that we would not be caught by Yuima's powerful silence. Yuima's way, including his silence, is a good example of the Bodhisattva's way to help others before helping himself, through suffering the same suffering with others, in accordance with the circumstances and the temperament of the people.

**Appreciatory Word:**

Totsu! Foolish aged Yuima!<sup>1</sup> Grieving for the people who suffer in vain,<sup>2</sup> he helplessly laid himself in the sickbed at Vaisali. His whole body was withered and exhausted. When the teachers of the seven Buddhas came, he tidied<sup>3</sup> up his room thoroughly. Earnestly he asked them about the doctrine of obtaining non-duality, but when he was asked back about it, he seems to have collapsed.<sup>4</sup> However, he was not broken down.<sup>5</sup> Even the Golden-maned Lion (Bodhisattva Monju) could not follow in Yuima's track.

## Footnotes

1. An ironical eulogy by Setcho of Yuima, who is a good example of the Bodhisattva.
2. See the quotation from Dogen's Shobogenzo, below:

After all, Yuima's silence and his illness should be understood not just as the "finger to point at the moon," but also as the actual practice of the ultimate teaching of Buddha. This is the Bodhisattva's way which is neither for yourself nor for others, but for Buddhism. Zen master Dogen says: "When you practice right practice, your inner treasure house will open by itself and the treasures will offer themselves for your free use (Oneness of duality)."

"By the Awakening of the Wisdom-Heart is meant the earnest desire to save all beings, even before we ourselves (laymen and priests) have attained Enlightenment. Anyone who cherishes this desire is the great teacher of all living beings. Even a little girl seven years old may be the teacher of four classes of men. This spirituality has nothing to do with sexes or age in the law of the supreme teaching of Buddha (Duality of oneness)."

"The Buddha Sakyamuni is to be found in one's own mind. Find out what this one mind is, and by so doing you will show your gratitude to the Buddha." (Dogen).

3. He cleared up his mind of discriminating ideas, of gaining or losing, good or bad, and waited for Buddha's disciples' visit.
4. When Monju was asked about the doctrine of obtaining non-duality, he said: "No words, no verses, no interpretations." But Yuima did not say anything when he was asked back about it, just as if he had collapsed. But his "no answer" in this case was the best relish ever given by any disciple of Buddha to the eternal teaching of non-duality.
5. However, later, even Zen students became attached to his silence without knowing that we should realize the same truth even in the prattle of an old man. Setcho is said to be very kind in that he did not say anything about Yuima's silence so that his students would not be attached to the practice of silence alone. When Monju was talking about the ultimate teaching, the whole world was nothing but Monju's and there was no Yuima; and when Monju and the other disciples of Buddha were listening to Yuima, the whole universe was Yuima and there were no disciples of Buddha. For this reason, you should say that before Monju disappears Yuima appears expressing one whole universe in different connotations. This is called the oneness of the duality or the doctrine of non-duality. The Bodhisattva's way of life is supported by this truth.