

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
SUMMER 7-DAY *SESSHIN* LECTURE: 6 PM
Wednesday, July 28, 1965
Lecture D
Soko-ji Temple, San Francisco

Tape operator: This is Reverend Suzuki's six o'clock lecture on Wednesday.

Suzuki-rōshi: I cannot think of anything to talk [about] for this evening. So if you have some question please ask me, and I will talk about your question as an answer, and—and then we will have discussion. Do you have some—will you give me some subject to talk about?

Student A: You spoke on—of a large patience and a small patience [laughs] and elaborated on the large patience but not on the small patience. Could you make that all clear?

Suzuki-rōshi: Oooh. That is—you know, Reverend Katagiri's name [?] is big patience. [Laughing, laughter ongoing.] So maybe better for him to explain, you know, what it is. And small patience. Okay.

Student A: I didn't know about that. I thought that big patience was the —something to do with when—what the Buddha was [6-8 words unclear] patience. [Laughs.] And—but I think there's probably a small amount of patience that is in the way of the other ideas that the passions are bogus [?]. And it occurs to me that if you're too patient, then you—it [2-3 words unclear], you know?.

Suzuki-rōshi: It makes sense. [1 word.] I think so. Did you say big patient ["patience" here *et seq.*]*—small patient is like even though you have physical suffering or—*

Student A: I felt that was the large patience.

Suzuki-rōshi: —and mental suffering, to be patient is small patient. And big patient is something different from to be patient with your physical or mental distress or suffering. I think this makes sense, I think. That is small patient, or—but big patient is to be patient for not—for not knowing anything, or for not being—for not to achieve anything, you know. This is big patient. We want to achieve something in some visible way. And we want some result, and we want to utilize our religious way to—to help. When you are even—for—when your small patient [laughs] could not help you, even small patience does not help you. Do you understand what I want to say?

You know, just to sit is big patient for [laughs] not achieving anything.

Just sit. And to repeat same thing over and over again, day after day, just to repeat things over and over. We say even though Buddhism is impossible to attain, we should attain it. This is big patient, knowing that it is impossible. But we cannot help doing so with big patient. That is not even—that is not patient even. That is to do something because you cannot help doing so.

Even though sentient being is innumerable, we should save them all [laughs]. This is impossible, you know, because if the sentient beings are innumerable it is impossible to save them all. Isn't that so? Even though we know that, that it is impossible, but we cannot help trying to save them all. That is the absolute of what I called—inmost request, absolute request. Some—something—I don't know—someone or who it is, but someone tells us to do so. And we hear that voice always, so I must—I cannot help doing so because someone telling me to do so or someone telling me, "please help me." So we cannot help doing so, not because of "this is Buddhism" or not because of "this is big patient," not because of what Buddha said. It is unconditional request for us. We have this kind of nature. If it is supreme teaching, absolute teaching, it is impossible to achieve. It is impossible to understand it. This is big patient, and this is not even the matter of big or small. It may be very small—sometime may be smallest patience.

Student B: How do we listen and how do we hear the inner request?

Suzuki-rōshi: Well, we always hear our inmost request incessantly. When—as long as we live [?], we always listen, you know, our—the conscientious—voice of conscience.

Student C: How do you answer people who argue that—that they must ignore—that big patience requires that they ignore their inmost request, and instead simply conform to the world they find themselves in. Say, you know, like a man with a job where he admits his neediness or, you know, who kinds of—

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm—hmm.

Student C: —puts out some kind of customary task and he admits it—

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah, yeah.

Student C: —how can he—he says that this—

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

Student C: —this is big patience this is darkness—

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student C: How do you live [?] through it?

Suzuki-rōshi: That is why we have teaching, you know.

Student C: Yeah.

Suzuki-rōshi: You know, they ignore it usually. Almost all people ignore—ignore our true existence, and some superficial understanding of self is—what do they mean by "self"? They ignore true self. "I'm not doing Zen," they say. "I'm not doing something wrong. I am always doing something right." [Laughs.] That is what they will say. But if you—if you listen to your inmost voice or inm- [partial word]—voice of conscience, you know, you—it is not so simple.

Student D: Is it something like reciting sūtras? That's—often we ourselves are making so much noise, so many sounds out—

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Suzuki-rōshi: —or going out that we can't hear this voice within. We have to stop making noise and start making noises on one level to be able to listen on the deeper level.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. Yeah. That is why we say you—you should not recite sūtra, you know. Your, true nature should recite sūtra. Big mind recites, not small mind, not—small self should not recite sūtra. The self which is universal to everyone should recite sūtra with people.

Here we have—when we say—I say like this, here is already some duality, you know. Small self or big self. But actually the small self does not exist. That which exist is big self only. We—we just create small self, and we say this is right [laughs]. But it is not right, you know. So first of all we should be free from, or we should be emancipated from the idea of small self. That is why Buddha says, "Every constituent existence is doomed to suffer."

Every constituent objects, everything which we see, which we feel, which we can understand is—because it is not true, so it should be full of suffering, suffering itself because it is dualistic. When there is duality, there is suffering. In this sense, everything is—appears in the form of suffering, and it is not—when you understand that is not true existence, there is no more suffering. If you find out that is just a dream [laughs], there is no suffering. The dream you created or you have dreamed of it, then there is no more suffering.

So first of all we should understand four noble truths. Four noble truths is why we suffer, and this world is full of suffering. And this intelligent world

is full of suffering. The world we seek is full of suffering. And nirvāna—when you find out those world where we have full of suffering is not real, then you have nirvāna. And how to attain nirvāna is way to attain nirvāna. So those are four noble truths.

Why we, you know—Buddha told us four noble truths is to destroy your easy way of understanding of life: scientific understanding or philosophical understanding. Those understanding is easy way, you know. Without any effort you can read books [laughs]. Even though you are lying down you can study [laughs, laughter]. Very easy. But, you know—it is very easy, but it will not help you, actually will not help you.

If you realize it will help you if I do it [laughs], then that is right understanding. But when you read some interesting philosophy, when you are interested in something, you know, unusual, you feel as if you are doing right thing [laughs]. We are not doing right thing. Book is book, and your life is your life [laughs]. And if you don't know what to do, you may take a risk. That's very easy [laughs, laughter]. And that is usual way, you know, our usual way. And we think this is most scientific and intellectual way. "If I have LSD, there will be no need to practice zazen" [laughs, laughter]. Oh my! [Laughs, laughter.] It is very difficult to, you know, to make them realize what they are doing. When they think they are right, you know, it is very difficult to find—to let them know why that is wrong. They may find out, you know, what they were doing, and they are [will be] doing some day, but when it is too late [laughs].

Student E: What did you say about suffering? You said that individual beings are suffering, and their suffering is a form—do you mean that it is a form through which their original nature is—or in which—is the only form in which they're able to recognize their original nature? Or what kind of a form is suffering? How can we know it? And how can we see through it?

Suzuki-rōshi: Why we suffer is because everything which will give you suffering is something created by our mind. Everything you see is something created by your mind. When we say "suffering," that is your suffering. Your suffering is—comes from something which is created by your mind. You are participating in creating some suffering. May not be just you, but you are acting main part of the play. And you create suffering. And you suffer from it.

Originally, there is no suffering. Everything going in it's own way, and there should [not] be n- [partial word]—any suffering. But because of your—because you create some suffering. Everything—every thing are change, and everything growing, but sometime you want to stop it, and you want to own that flower, like a artificial flower. That is cause of suffering, and you create that suffering. If you let the flower as it is, you have no suffering. When you say "suffering," it is already the flower which was—which is created by you. It is pretty hard to accept the flower which

is growing or which is falling. When you see the suffer- [incomplete word] —flower, you know, you feel as if it exist forever [laughs]. But actually it doesn't.

Student F: How can you meditate when your legs are aching?
[Laughter.]

Suzuki-rōshi: Hmm?

Student F: Is that all in the mind?

Suzuki-rōshi: Just be patient [laughs, laughter].

Student G: Master? What are the differences between prolonged sitting and sitting a short time each day? Are the results different in character and form?

Suzuki-rōshi: Prolonged?

Student G: Zazen over a long period of time—

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh.

Student G: —as compared to a short period each day.

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh. Which is better you mean?

Student G: Which is different? What are the differences in character and quality of the result?

Suzuki-rōshi: Result?

Student G: Is one better than the other? [General laughter.] I take that word back. What is the difference?

Suzuki-rōshi: Long period of zazen is very difficult, you know. Short period of zazen is very difficult too. It is rather troublesome to do every morning [laughs, laughter]. So the result will be different but difficulty is the same [laughs, laughter]. So, you know, long period of zazen is easier, I think, easier if you have time. This is much easier, and you will have a deeper understanding. You can clear up—you have possibility to clear up your misunder- [partial word]—all of your misunderstanding. You will stop creating suffering [laughs, laughter]. But if you know that—if you only know that you are creating suffering for yourself, this is good enough, and it will work pretty well. "Oh, I am creating suffering. I have created difficult problem." If you—when you say so, you are already out of the suffering. You are not completely involved in the suffering you have.

So even [if] you get out of the suffering—if your one hand is out of suffering that's enough, even though you are not completely free from suffering. But if your one eye will be enough to see what you are doing is enough. You can see by your one eye, you know [laughs, laughter]. You will say, "Oh!" [Laughs, laughter.] "Oh my. I am creating suffering. There is no need to open two eyes."

But before you open one eye, it takes time maybe. But for someone who suffer a lot, it is not so difficult. That is why we do not help people so easily. We are waiting for [when] they are doing best and to confront completely with the problem.

Student H: In trying to follow your inmost request in behaving, you know, in expressing yourself, it would be very easy to confuse your strongest emotional feeling—wouldn't it?—with your inmost request—

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

Student H: —or to confuse your most logical pattern of thinking with it. And I'm afraid of kidding myself, you know, of thinking that just because I feel strongly about something that this is really what I should do. And so is your inmost request something quite beyond emotion and logic, either one?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yes, it is. But you will find actual inmost request in emotional feeling. Logical feeling is secondary.

Student H: Because I've been brought up being told that I shouldn't follow my emotions, and I should follow your logical thinking. I never know which.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. But, you know, the emotional—whether it is bad or good or bad, you have it, and that is strongest, you know. It is easier to find out what is your inmost request in the strongest function of your mind. It is easier. And if you find out in the—your true nature, in your strongest emotional feeling, you will be very much encouraged by it. But if you find out the—what do I mean by inmost request by logical thinking, you think, "I understand that is inmost request." That's all. When you understand it, it will be forgotten, and you will [think]: "In this book, someone says inmost request is something such-and-such. So when it is necessary, if I read that part I can understand it." This kind of understanding will not help you at all. And in case of necessity, you will forget all about it [laughs].

But if you find out your inmost request with, you know, by struggling or by —with tear, or with difficulty, you will never forget about it. And the inmost request is in the—in emotional feeling rather than logical reason. The logical understanding of inmost request is philosophy—philosophy of

the true nature. And the understanding of inmost request by your tear is, you know, is not—is actual feeling—actual—it makes sense to you, you know. And you can apply it. You will never forget about it. So we should know that there is truth in our utmost distress or suffering.

So we should not forget that there is truth in suffering. And we should not try to escape from it. We should fight it out [laughs]. It is possible. When you, you know, hesitate, you will be lost. When you face to it, you will win. That is true [laughs].

Student I: Reverend Suzuki, could you say that again? I couldn't quite catch it. The last two sentences.

Suzuki-rōshi: If you hesitate to accept it, you will be lost. There is limit, or there is time for the suffering to stop. But true nature will never cease to act. The terminology [laughs] of delusion is something which is not real and which will—which can be put an end to it. That is delusion. And true nature is something which is eternal. You cannot—true nature will not be lost. And through suffering there is true—you can have direct experience of your true nature, how strong it is. Your true nature is much much more than—stronger than your, you know, suffering you created—"small you" created. The true nature is incomparably greater than small mind.

Student H: Will the pain that you feel, the physical pain, do you mean that you create that because you think that you're alone in it? I mean, it is real, isn't it? [Laughter.]

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah, it is real [laughs, laughter]. If you accept it, it is real. If you don't accept it, it is not real, you know. "I—my legs is painful." That's all. If you put a period, you know, "I am painful." That's real. But if you say, "I am painful, so what shall I do?" Or, [laughs] "Whether I should escape from it." Or, "There—is there any way to escape from it?" Then the pain you mean will become big [laughs]. That is "big patient [patience]." To accept the pain as it is is big patient.

Moreover, your body is not yours at all [laughs], in its true sense. "True you" have no form or—it has no form or no body to have pain. "True you" has no pain at all. True—sometime true na- [partial word]—your true nature tell your physical body to kill yourself [laughs], if it is necessary. That is true self. If you have fully enlightened in your true self, whether you are painful—your body is painful or not is not the problem. So religious, you know, mind is so strong. If it is necessary, they will burn their physical body.¹ It's all right [laughs]. Your true nature—when your true nature tell you to burn up your body, that's all right. It is so strong. It is much stronger than emotion. By emotion you cannot do that. Just,

¹ In June of 1963, Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Quang Duc immolated himself as Buddhist opposition to the Ngo Dinh Diem government gained momentum. His death was discussed widely in the United States.

you know, your true nature can do it.

But when I say in this way, you will—you will have some misunderstanding. That is why we have "cover" for us. That is why we have *Shōbōgenzō*—what is true religion. Just to burn yourself, just to jump into a fire is not religion. Sometime crazy person will do that [laughs]. So right understanding of our inmost nature is very important. That is why we have teacher. That is why we have *Shōbōgenzō*. All right?

Student J: What if a person doesn't believe there is a true nature and is immersed in suffering: physical, mental, and emotional suffering? [6-8 words unclear. Maybe: "The passions do not leave her.]"

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

Student J: Then what?

Suzuki-rōshi: Worse, yeah much—if the people who say, "I am right," that is worst [laughs]. "I am [not] doing anything wrong." That [is] worst people. Those people will create various problem in this world. They are creating problem without knowing they are creating it. So there is no way to persuade them.

Student J: But suppose you have to work with them.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

Student J: Then what?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. That is why—

Student J: [2-3 words] so doubtful.

Suzuki-rōshi: That is why we have to have clear understanding of our life. When you work with people like that, we have to have clear understanding of what is suffering and what is our true nature. If one person understand it clearly, many people will be enlightened. But without enlightenment, to help people means nothing. Don't you think so? We say, "blind [laughs] man leading blind men." [Laughing, laughter.] Even though they have lantern, it doesn't work because leader is blind [1 word]. People are blind. So lantern does not work. They say, "Ah, we don't want anything. We can walk by ourselves and build a bridge up into a river or a ditch."

Student K: But everyone helps me every day, and not everyone is enlightened.

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh. Yeah. It is so. If you are enlightened, everyone

will help you. If you are not enlightened [laughs, laughter], even though everyone [helps?], you will not be helped. This is—this point is very important. If you are enlightened, actually everyone, whether or not they are enlightened, will help you.

Student L: You mentioned crazy people a minute ago. What happens to the true nature of somebody who goes crazy? Where is it?

Suzuki-rōshi: Where is it? [Laughs, laughter.] [4 words unclear.] They have it, but if I ask you—ask them, "Where is it?"—they will find it. "Oh!" [Laughs, laughter.] It is obvious that they have a true nature. There is no wonder, no doubt in it.

Student L: What—could somebody who had had mental suffering like that practice zazen? Could they improve that way or happen to be brought to know that they possess a true nature?

Suzuki-rōshi: Practice just to sit is maybe enough, you know. When they can sit they are pretty good already, you know. When they think, "I am right," you know, "I—there is no need for me to practice religious way"—if they say so, that's the worst. When you think it is necessary for you to practice zazen, that is big improvement. Just to try to sit is good enough.

But most people are attached to some result of the practice. That is why they do not attain enlightenment. Enlightenment is right here in your practice. And—but they think by practice something will result, you know. But actually enlightenment is right here. That is already a great improvement, and you have at least one eye to see yourself. And you— one eye will tell you you are not so good [laughs, laughter]. That is a big enlightenment. When you think that you are not so good, you are always—you are already trying to—the—your true nature start to work.

Student M: How do you distinguish between feelings of "I'm not so good"—that I mean [laughs]—[it's] not necessarily a good thing to think that because it can be also—generally it's a fantasy too. You know, "I'm no good."

Suzuki-rōshi: Oh. Fantasy—I don't mean fantasy. It should follow the practice. "I'm not so good, so I should improve myself." That is not fantasy.

Student M: But I mean—

Suzuki-rōshi: You know, fantasy: "I'm not so good. Ohh." This is fantasy. "I'm not so good." This is our practice [laughs].²

² In the first quote, Suzuki-rōshi uses a despairing tone of voice. In the second, he speaks affirmatively.

So in Japan we had a clinic for—clinic for the people—insane, and in that clinic the patient work all day long. Even though they have nothing to do, they should pick up dust, or [laughs, laughter] clean floor, or repair *shōji*. They must find out something to do as long as they stay in the clinic. That way helps patient very much. When you are lying [in] bed in this way, "What it is?" or "What I should do?" "Why I am so bleak?" In this way, there is no time. There is no hope to be—to recover. You should, you know, set your true nature in activity—in, you know, set your machine in motion. That is only way.

There were famous novelist, Tōson Shimazaki.³ He is quite famous. And he said—in the opening page he said, "If you want to raise yourself—raise your mind, you should raise your body," he said. I was very much interested, very much encouraged by his words when I was quite young. At that time, I couldn't go to college because I had to help my master, you know. I couldn't go to college. And I didn't know what to do. I wanted to go, but [laughs] I had to help him. So sometime I, you know, did not know what to do. And when I read that, you know, two lines, "If you want to raise your mind, you should raise your body." That is why he went abroad. But I thought that is very good, so I must do something. If I think, "What shall I do?"—I must suffer more. So I must work hard: cooking, or cleaning, or sweeping garden. So I stopped to think about myself, and I worked, and worked, and worked. And that helped me very much.

This is very important point: to fight it out with body [laughs], not by mind, not by thinking, not by wandering about. To find something which we should do at that moment is the best way to raise our mind. To raise our mind means to realize big mind, not small mind. Small mind [is] wandering about. But big mind—for big mind there is no place or no time to wander about. It is too big [laughs] to wandering about [laughs]. Too big. If you want to realize that, you know, unperturbability of your spirit, you have [to] raise your body. There is enlightenment.

Source: Original City Center tape. Transcribed by Diana Bartle and Bill Redican (5/24/01).

³ Shimazaki Tōson (1872-1943): born in the countryside, he spent his formative years in Tōkyō from the age of eight. In his semi-autobiographical first-person novels, he evoked lost links to his early childhood. The novel *Suzuki-rōshi* referred to may be *Before the Dawn*, *The Broken Commandment*, *The Family*, or *Shinsei*.