

Rev Suzuki lecture
February 2, 1967
Los Altos

As I cannot speak your language so well that I find some way to communicate with you. And this effort I think results something very good. Originally we say if we do not understand master's word you cannot understand our way. Communication is very important in our practice. If you...we say if you do not understand master's word, or master's language...I do not know...not language, but word...anyway the way he speaks, or to understand your master in its true sense that is what we mean. So this is not just word or language, but language in its wider sense. So through his words you understand more than what he says. Statements usually involved in or implied speaker's subjective intention as well as listener's situation, or listener's objective situation, or matters about statement is told. So no word is perfect; it is involved in something, some statement. So there's no perfect word. It is always involved in something...some distortion is always follow in statement. But through statement we have to understand the fact, or the event, or something which has happened to us. You may say Being, or Ultimate Truth. Ultimate Truth we do not mean something eternal, something constant, but we mean the things as it is, you may say Being or Reality. If we understand things as it is that is Reality. But it is difficulty to speak about the reality, because when I speak about it my subjective intention is involved in it and it implies some subjective opinion about it; so it is not possible to speak about Reality. But through master's word we have to understand the Reality directly.

How to understand the Reality as a direct experience is why we practice zazen. And why we study Buddhism. By study of Buddhism you will understand our human nature or our intellectual faculty...something which follows our human nature or our intellectual faculty...something which follows our human activity...some truth which follows our human activity. By knowing our human nature we can take human nature in consideration when we understand something. By study of teaching, by practice we will understand various statements made by your teacher or Buddha in its true sense.

The direct statement may be not only word, but also behavior is the way of expressing ourselves. So we put emphasis on our demeanor or behavior. By behavior we do not mean that you should behave like this or like that, but natural expression of yourself. So we emphasize our straight forwardness. We should be true to our feeling and to our mind. Anyway we should express ourselves without any reservations. This is the way how we express our teaching or our nature in its true sense. And it makes a listener, or it makes others to understand easier.

And when you listen to someone you should give up your...all your preconceived ideas or some subjective opinion and you should just listen to him, just observe him. That is how we communicate with each other. So here very little emphasis is put on right or wrong, or good or bad. We just see things as it is and accept things. That is how we communicate with each other. When we understand some statement it is quite usual to understand the statement as a kind of echo of yourself. Actually you are listening to your own opinion. If it is convenient to your opinion...if it is convenient to your opinion you may take it, but if it is not you do not hear it. So that is not...that is one danger when you listen to someone. The other danger is to be caught by the opinion. To be caught by the opinion means...if you are caught by it in its true sense it is alright, but without being caught by the statement in its true sense we will be easily caught by the...something which is involved in some subjective opinion or way of expressing of your teacher...some particular way of expressing things, and without understanding your teacher it its true sense you will understand the way he speaks or what he says as a statement without understanding his spirit. This kind of danger is always there. So it is difficult to get good communication (?) for your children because parents, mothers or fathers, has his own good or bad way. But their intention is always good but the way he speaks or the way he expresses is not so free. Usually we have our own way. It is difficult to change our way according to the circumstances. If he can manage it to express themselves in various way there will be no danger in the education of their children, but it is rather hard. Even a Zen master has his own way. Insher(?) zenji always...when he scold him he said, ‘Go away’. So one student left his temple. But it

doesn't mean to expel him. That is his way. Instead of saying, "Be careful" he says "Go away". So this kind of habit is very, if your parents have this kind of habit you will easily misunderstand your parents. This kind of danger is always follows in our everyday life. So as a listener or a disciple it is necessary to clear up your mind from various associations or preconceived ideas, or your own intention or your own habit. So that is why we practice zazen and clear our mind related to something else.

To be quite natural...to ourselves, and to follow what others say or what others do in the most appropriate way is pretty difficult. So...but we cannot adjust ourselves, in some way. It is impossible. If you try to adjust yourself in certain way you will lose yourself. So without adjust yourself, without any artificial, fancy way of adjusting yourself, to express yourself quite freely is the most important thing to make you happy and to make others happy. And how we acquire this kind of ability is why we practice zazen. Our teaching is not just art of life, art of living. In short, our teaching is to live always in Reality in its exact sense, and to make effort on each moment on what we do. What we can study in its exact sense is what we do in each moment. We cannot even study Buddha's word. When we study Buddha's word in its exact sense it means to study Buddha's word through some occasion you face moment after moment. So we should be concentrated on what we do and we should be faithful subjectively and objectively to ourselves and especially to our feeling. Even when you do not feel so well it is better to express it in that way without any particular attachment or indication. So you may say, 'Oh, I am sorry, but I don't feel well.' That is enough. You should not say, 'You made me...(laughter) That is too much. "Oh, I am sorry. I am so angry with you." There is no need to say 'I am not angry'. You should say, "I am angry". That is our way.