

October 21, 1965
Rev. S. Suzuki
Thursday morning lecture

As you know, in Buddhism there are many schools. But you can classify Buddhism into Mahayana and Hinayana schools. Almost all schools in Japan belong to Mahayana school. Mahayana people called original Buddhists, old Buddhists or direct disciples of Buddha, called Hinayana Buddhists. It means small vehicle while Mahayana is big or large vehicle. But Mahayana school originated from Hinayana school. Development of Buddhism take place and Mahayana school is supposed to be more advanced school. But it is not exactly so. Even in the time of Buddha there were many Mahayanistic disciples. And it is pretty difficult to say which is better, Mahayana or Hinayana. So in Soto school we do not say Mahayana is good or Hinayana is good. Just the same, and from standpoint of zen Buddha practiced zen, and Hinayana Buddhists and Mahayana Buddhists have been practicing zazen. So, if we become...if we discriminate the teaching which was told by him, or forms which he set up at the time of Buddha, or the rules which were set by some other disciples is based on his character, and his character is based on his practice. And so, from this standpoint, for zen Buddhists, there is no need to say Mahayana Buddhism or Hinayana Buddhism.

But original, direct disciples of Buddha were too much attached to the form and teaching which was set up by Buddha. But Mahayana Buddhists emphasized his speech rather than teaching or precepts (observing precepts) or form of rituals. And Hinayana Buddhists emphasized to save themselves, but Mahayana emphasized to save others as well as to save themselves. To save themselves and to save others is principle of Mahayana Buddhists. For Hinayana Buddhists zen practice is to save themselves, but Mahayana Buddhists practice is to save others. In this practice we are supposed to save ourselves and others. This practice is not just for ourselves. It is actually to save others.

When we practice zazen, when we become one with others, there we have enlightenment. When we have this enlightenment, this practice is for others too.

You may say you are just sitting on your cushion but that is just form. But spiritually our practice is to save ourselves and at the same time to save others. And save all the living beings (animate and inanimate beings) this is our practice. So, in understanding of zen there is a slight difference between Hinayana practice and Mahayana practice. But even Hinayana practice cannot be just egocentric practice. To save themselves is at the same time to save others. At least by their hard practice they will encourage people. To do something for yourself and to be happy by yourself is at the same time to make the others happy. So there is no practice just for themselves. 'Every practice will help others. So it is not necessary to classify our activity - this is for myself and this is for others.

Whatever you do that is for yourself and for others too. And strictly speaking we cannot be separated from others. We exist with others. So, when you become happy your mother will be happy and you family will be happy, your boys and girls will be happy. When you are distressed your family will be distressed and your friend will be distressed. So, actually, especially mentally, we cannot be separated from others. It is impossible to live alone.

So to say this is for others or this is for myself is poor understanding of our life. Because of poor understanding we uselessly discriminate our activity. Here the most important thing is to do something from the bottom of our heart. That is the most important point for purity our impetus of doing something. Straightforwardness is wanted, as the sixth patriarch emphasized. Whatever you do, if you do it with straightforwardness that is the most important point we emphasize. In this way Mahayana Buddhism developed after the Hinayana Buddhism became more formal and rigid. When Buddha was teaching them there were no need to be so spiritual or just because they were spiritually supported

by him. But after Buddha was no more they become more and more concerned about what is Buddha and how to attain Buddhahood like him. This kind of study resulted in Mahayana Buddhism two or three hundred years after Buddha passed away, and between two hundred and three hundred Mahayana Buddhism completely formed by famous scholars like Nyaraguna(?) or Seshin(?). That is of course, how zen Buddhism arose.

And then Zen Buddhism became more and more – Zen Buddhists became more and more powerful and zen practice became more and more popular in India, until Bodhidharma came to China, 500. And in China Zen Buddhism developed in various ways under the influence of Chinese civilization. By Chinese civilization I mean Taoist or Confucianism – anyway more practical culture. Zen Buddhism became more and more practical in China. And on the other hand, Zen Buddhism became more and more popular. And how they propagated Zen Buddhism was very interesting. They applied various ways in propagating Zen Buddhism, not just by practice, by art, poem or painting. And this kind of civilization based on Zen Buddhism was introduced to Japan in the twelfth century, and in Japan Zen Buddhism became more and more aesthetic and simple, and on the other hand, Zen Buddhism organized in more philosophical way because Japanese people are interested in simplicity of the teaching. How to simplify zen philosophy or Zen Buddhism was their main effort, especially by Dogen, Zen Buddhism became one teaching with the other teaching.

In China there were many families but in Japan Soto and Rinzai was most outstanding schools. Actually Dogen studied Rinzai school. I think, nowadays they become more and more (even Rinzai masters) more and more became Soto-like. And Soto masters also studied Rinzai. Maybe for fifty or seventy years we are studying Rinzai way too, and the philosophical interpretation of zen is mostly Soto way, according to Shobogenzo which

was written by Dogen. So, if you want to understand what is zen, it is better to understand it by Dogen. Intellectually, it is better to understand by Dogen. Of course, intellectual understanding is not enough, or intellectual understanding is not zen. Zen should be understood by practice, but because we are so intellectual, intellectual interpretation of zen is necessary. But why Dogen worked so hard, was because we will be involved in intellectual study completely, forgetting all about our actual practice. That is why Dogen worked so hard. Unfortunately, for us, our publication is not so good. We have many things to do, and we have to translate Dogen's work in English and this is pretty hard job. Even for Dogen, Japanese language was not good enough. He found it very difficult to express his way in Japanese language so he made many technical terms for himself to express his idea, and he used some special grammar. His writing, you know, is very difficult because his grammar is very special—not usual, you know, Japanese grammar. He wanted to express it as much as he can, in words. That was, that is why it is so difficult to understand, even for a Japanese. Until we get accustomed to his way of putting his idea in his word. But it is lucky we have Dogen in our civilization, and his idea will help the Western world a lot, because his thought transcend Japanese way of thinking.

So, if you have time (I think you have already been through D. T. Suzuki's work and you are through already D. T. Suzuki's work, but his zen is, for you especially you who are very much interested in psychology, so his work is concentrated on psychological interpretation of zen, but that is not perfect, you know.) Of course he knows about it—not perfect. Zen is not just psychological state of mind. Zen is based on, the most important thing, for zen is the way-seeking mind or our sincerity or constant effort. Our constant effort will result some, you know, psychological state of mind, but the most important thing is transmitted spirit from Buddha to us. Our constant effort which will

last forever. So the most important point for us is to acquire the spirit of practicing zen, or to realize your true nature, or to make your effort to appease your inmost request, or to attain vital freedom is our—the most important point. If you want to attain vital freedom— to attain vital freedom is to realize our inmost request – to realize our inmost request is to make your mind peace. Without realizing your true nature, it is impossible to make yourself peace. So by peaceful mind we mean to have eternal practice based on our inmost nature. So far, zen practice is the most, is the best way to appease our inmost request. That is why we practice zazen. Zen practice is not for sake of attaining some state of mind. It is rather...to practice it to appease ourselves. So when you realize that whatever you do, you cannot satisfy it with what you do, then you will find out zen practice is the only practice we have. This is why we practice zazen. So zen practice is to find yourself. By practice you will find yourself and your...when you realize your nature, when you realize what is your life, that will encourage your practice. In this way, once you start zen, little by little you will realize how important it is to sit, in this way, and to continue this practice. This is not only a kind of religion. In its larger sense zen practice is something more than religion in its narrow sense.

ZMBMms box transcript. Exact copy entered onto disk and emailed to DChadwich by GM 06-25-08. Date of lecture changed by DChadwich from Oct. 21 to Oct. 22.