

November 10, 1965 (date changed to 11th – DC.08)

Rev. S. Suzuki

Thursday morning lectures

Beginner's Mind

People say to study zen is difficult but there is some misunderstanding why it is difficult. It is not difficult because to sit in cross legged position is hard or to attain enlightenment is hard, but it is hard to keep our mind pure and to keep our practice pure in original way. Zen become more and more impure and after zen school established in China it is development of zen but at the same time it is...it become impure. But I don't want to talk about Chinese zen or history of zen this morning. But why I say I want to talk about why it is difficult is because just you came here this morning, getting up early is very valuable experience for you. Just you wanted to come is very valuable. We say 'sho shin'. Sho shin means beginner's mind. If we can keep beginner's mind always that is the goal of our practice. We recited Prajna Paramita Sutra this morning only once. I think we recited very well, but what will happen to us if we recite it twice, three times, four times and more? Then we will easily lose our attitude in reciting – original attitude in reciting- the sutra. Same thing will happen to us. For awhile we will keep our beginner's mind in your (blank space in transcript). If we continue to practice one year, two years, three years or more we will have some (blank on transcript) and we will lose the limitless meaning of the original mind.

In beginner's mind we have many possibilities, but in expert mind there is not much possibility. So in our practice it is important to resume to our original mind or inmost mind which we, ourselves, even we ourselves do not know what it is. This is the most important thing for us. The founder of our school emphasized this point. We have to

remain always beginners mind. This is the secret of zen and secret of various practices... .practice of flower arrangement, practice of Japanese singing and various art. If we keep our beginner's mind, we keep our precepts. When we lose our beginner's mind we will lose all the precepts and for zen students the most important thing is not to be dualistic or not...we should not lose our self-satisfied state of mind. We should not be too demanding, or we should not be too greedy. Our mind should always be rich and self-satisfied. When our mind become demanding...when we become longing for something, we will violate our precepts not to kill, not to be immoral, not to steal, or not to tell lie and so on. Those are based on our greedy mind. When our mind is self-satisfied we keep our precepts. When we ourselves is always self-satisfied, we have our original mind and we can practice good and we are always true to ourselves. So the most difficult thing is to keep our beginner's mind in our practice. So if you can keep your beginner's mind forever, you are Buddha. In this point, our practice should be constant. We should practice our way with beginner's mind always. There is no need to have deep understanding about zen. Even though you read zen literature you have to keep this beginner's mind. You have to read it with fresh mind. We shouldn't say, "I know what is zen" or "I have attained enlightenment.". We should be always big enough. This is very important. And we should be very very careful about this point.

I was very much impressed by your practice this morning. Although your posture was not perfect, but the feeling you have here is wonderful. There is no comparison to it. At the same time we should make our effort to keep this feeling forever in your practice. This is very very important. In Japanese art, when you master some art...when you become successor of your master, you will receive some paper on which something is written.

ZMBMms box transcript. Exact copy entered onto disc and emailed to DChadwich by GM 06/28/08.

No one knows what it is. It is very difficult to figure out what it is....to explain what it is. But if you have beginner's mind, it's all right. If you can say, "Thank you very much" from the bottom of your heart, that's all right. If you say "What it is?" you have no secret....you can say "Thank you very much". That's enough. But this is very difficult. So by your practice we must make our beginner's mind more and more....we should appreciate beginner's mind. This is the secret of practice....zen practice.