

Rev. S. Suzuki lecture

December 8, 1966

I am very glad to be here the day Buddha was born ... when Buddha attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. When he attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree he said, "It is wonderful to see Buddha nature on everything and in each individual." What he meant was when we practice zen...zazen we have Buddha nature and we are all Buddha himself. By practice he did not mean just to sit under the Bodhi tree or to sit in cross-legged posture. Our cross-legged posture is the basic posture or original posture for us... most fundamental way of being here. But what he meant actually was that mountain is or trees are or flowing water or flowers and plants and everything as they are is the way Buddha is. It means everything is taking Buddha's activity in each position and in each way, but the way they are for themselves is not understood by themselves in realm of consciousness. What we see or what we hear is just a part of it, or limited idea of how we are, but when we just sit we are being our conception. In other words when we practice something, like we sit here there is Buddha's way or Buddha nature. So when we ask what is Buddha nature Buddha nature will be vanished, but when we just practice zazen like this we have full understanding of Buddha nature. The only way to obtain Buddha nature or understand Buddha nature is just to practice zazen or just to be here in this way. So what he meant by...to found out Buddha nature was to be there as he was beyond the realm of consciousness. So, you may be...it may be said we have originally Buddha nature before we practice zazen...before we acknowledge it in terms of consciousness. So in this sense whatever we do, that is Buddha's activity. So, if you want to understand it you cannot understand it. When you give up to understand it true understanding is there

always. Usually, after zazen, I talk for you, something, but why you come here is not to just listen to my talk, but to practice zazen. This point should be always remembered by us. Why I talk in this way is to encourage to practice true zazen.

So we say, although we have Buddha nature, if you do not practice it, in other words if you try to understand it some other way, you do not understand it but just when you practice it you will understand what is our way. This point is very important for Buddhists. We do not talk so much, but through our activity we communicate with each other...intentionally or unintentionally and we should be always alert enough to communicate without words or with words. If this point is lost we will lose the most important point of Buddhism. So wherever we go we should not lose this way of life. That is so-called to be Buddha, or to be boss. Where-ever you go we say you should be the master of the surroundings. It means you should not lose your way. So that is so-called Buddha because if you are in that way always you are Buddha himself. Without trying to be Buddha you are Buddha. This is how we attain enlightenment. So, to attain enlightenment is to be always Buddha. By repeating same thing over and over we will acquire this kind of understanding, but if you lose the point by practice you will build up some thick wall for yourself by yourself. We should not confine ourselves in the thick wall which is built by study or by practice. So, if the time come just to get up and to come here and sit and talk or listen and go home all those procedures are our practice. If so you are always Buddha without any idea of attainment. This is true practice of zazen. You may understand the true meaning of Buddha's first statement of "to find out the Buddha nature on various beings and in every one of us" and

how different his teaching was from the various teachings which they have had.

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