

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
SESSHIN MEETING
Friday, July 31, 1970
San Francisco

This lecture was the source for the chapter of *Not Always So* called "Open Your Intuition" on p. 69.

... [laughter]. What she meant is if you stand up with painful legs or sleeping legs [laughs]—it will be dangerous [laughs, laughter]. That is why she said so. I think that is very important, and even though you feel your legs, okay. But it is better to make them sure [laughs], rubbing your knee.

Student A: I thought what she was saying was that once we stood up, we were supposed to stand there without moving—before we started walking.

Suzuki-rōshi: Excuse me, I don't—

Student A: I thought that, you know—

Suzuki-rōshi: —I don't know what she said, so it is difficult [laughter].

Student A: I just won't move [laughing] until the person in front of me leaves.

Suzuki-rōshi: When you make *kinhin*, or walk—if you walk too slowly or if you have too much distance between you and someone ahead of you, that will make other person difficult to walk, so you should be careful about the distance between you and a person ahead of you. So keep a certain distance. And if someone like me walks—naturally I walk slowly. That will give others some difficulties. And as I walk very slowly, I will have big distance from [laughs] a person who is walking ahead of me. So if you have too much distance in between, catch up to the person. That is very small things, but that kind of small things is pretty important to have good feeling in our practice.

Maybe do you have something more to say? [Apparently addressing a student who had spoken earlier.] Ah.

I am so much encouraged to see so many students, old and new. I hope we can sit together with good feeling.

The purpose of *sesshin* is to have a more stable practice for us, especially those who are involved in busy, everyday life. It is a good occasion to resume our true nature and to open our mind for various circumstances you may have in your everyday life.

And it may be incredibly important to practice with the students whom you are acquainted with. Even though you do not communicate by words, just to be with them will be a big encouragement. Verbal communication tends to be very superficial, but when you don't [laughs] speak, your communication between you will be very much encouraged, and your mind will become very subtle. And your intuition will be open by staying in silence. Just to stay here without saying anything for five days with you is already very meaningful. That is why we do not talk.

We when we are involved in some superficial interesting matters, because of some special interest, your true feeling will be covered by some special

feeling. So to open your innate nature, and to feel something from bottom of your heart, it is necessary to remain silent, and through this kind of practice you will have more intuitive understanding of teaching, and your intuition will be improved.

"Not to talk" does not mean to keep you deaf and [laughs] dumb. Just to improve your intuition, we practice silence during *sesshin* time. And so the same thing is true with your reading. If you read something interesting, because of something you become interested in it, it will be the disturbance of your ability to open your intuition. That is why we don't read.

It doesn't mean to confine yourself in a dark room [laughs]. It means that to encourage your intuition or to open your true mind is why we do not read. In zazen, we do not think, even.

Some of you maybe a Rinzai student who is practicing *kōan* practice. If so, he can practice *kōan* practice, too. But in *kōan* practice it is not necessary to speak or to read.

Of course, especially for beginners it may be difficult to stay silent or not to read even newspapers. You may be very, very much bored, so— [laughs, laughter]. In that case, you should ask for *kyosaku* [laughter]. Do you know what it does? If you do so, someone will hit you.

And that kind of thing will be taken care of mostly by old students. In *sesshin*, usually, everything will be taken care of by old students, and old students must help new students to practice more. And so old students take care of many things: serving meals for you, and giving some instructions, and carrying sticks. Those things should be well taken care of by old students.

Try anyway. Sit [laughs] and see what will happen to you [laughter]. And try to keep right posture according to the instruction. Important thing is to follow the rules. This is very important. "To follow rules" means to let you find yourself. If there is no rules, it is difficult for you to find yourself because you don't know where you are. [Laughs.] If there is food, you will know what time is it, and when we should eat, and which way we should walk [laughs].

If there is no rules, and no one taking care of you, it is rather difficult to practice. And it will be a great help. It is much better than to have no rules and sit in one corner of the room five days, without doing anything. So rules is something you should understand. Rules is something which help you. That is rules. Instead of restricting you by some cord.

If you have some question, I think I can answer.

Student B: During the *sesshin* should we still go on counting our breath, or would you recommend some other form of zazen?

Suzuki-rōshi: There are various kinds of practice. Following breathing, or counting breathing, or *kōan* practice. But I recommend you to, maybe this time, following breathing practice.

Student B: Following breathing—

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh.

Student B: —or counting?

Suzuki-rōshi: When you find it difficult to count, to follow your

breathing—counting breathing may help you because if you count your breathing, you know exactly what you are doing. When your practice gets lost, immediately, you will know it. So that will help you. But following breathing is good.

Student B: Just following breathing, but then you can't go in too deep?

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm. At that time, don't make too much effort in making your breathing slow down or making faster or anything like that. Just—if you just follow your breathing, then naturally, your breathing will be good, appropriate for your practice, even though you don't try to make it slower. If your breathing is fast—too fast, the breathing will be slowed down.

Student C: For *dokusan* do you sign up every day for that day, or do you sign up Sunday for the whole week?

Suzuki-rōshi: Maybe better to sign up.

Student C: Every day?

Suzuki-rōshi: Not every day. Hmm? What was—?

Dan Welch: There'll be a list, and just sign up once, whenever.

Recommend that you sign up early—soon as possible. If there's nobody on the list, there will be *dokusan*, so—

Student D: Dan, will Suzuki-rōshi be giving *dokusan*, do you know?

Dan: He'll be giving a few.

Student D: Will there be a sign-up sheet?

Dan: No.

Student D: So—

Dan: I can take care of that.

Suzuki-rōshi: If you send me some patient by ambulance [laughs, laughter], I will see the patient [laughs, laughter]. Do you have some question? *Hai*.

Student E: This is a beginner's question, but in your last lecture you said if another *rōshi* had said: "You can put your mind in the palm of your hand." And I didn't really understand, but I tried that, and [laughter]—it was very—very calming. It made me feel very calm, and I'm wondering if that's alright to do that, to calm your expiration... [Laughter.]

Suzuki-rōshi: Actually then, I created one more problem [laughter]. I said that, so that you may not be caught by some particular practice. Do you understand?

Student E: They are to do nothing but follow your breath.

Suzuki-rōshi: And you will listen to various instructions, but what I am saying is instruction will be given to you to help you, to help your practice. That is why we give you instruction. We do not give instruction so that I can force some practice, special practice, on you. Or it does not mean you should do this or you shouldn't do this. You may have various instructions, but if you think that will help, then you can do it. So that is up to you.

Student F: Where do the services take place? In the zendō also—

Dan: Yes.

Suzuki-rōshi: —or the Buddha hall?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah, in zendō. In *sesshin* time we do everything in

zendō. Some more questions?

Student G: What is the form for taking *dokusan*?

Dan: Before you go—for those of you who have never had *dokusan* before, the *jisha*, right, the attendant for the *rōshi* during *sesshin*, she's—Laurie Palmer, will do it this time. He will instruct you before it's your turn to go.

Suzuki-rōshi: Some more questions maybe?

[Suzuki-rōshi whispers with student (probably Dan Welch) for 2-3 sentences.]

Dan: Okay, uh—

Suzuki-rōshi: Thank you very much.

Dan: —if you all know where your seats are, located in the zendō, we'd like to go down and sit last [3-4 words unclear].

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