

February 17, 1966

Rev. S. Suzuki

The message for us for today was 'cultivate your own spirit'. It says there on the calendar...'Cultivate your own spirit. This is very important point and this is how we practice zen. When...for us to hear lecture, to give lecture or to recite sutra, or to sit, of course, is zen. Each of those activities should be zen, but if you do not...if your effort or practice is not...does not have right orientation it does not work at all... not only it does not work...it may spoil your pure nature. The more you know something about it the more you will get spoiled...you will have just stains on your mind, and your mind will be filled with rubbish. That is not...that is quite usual for us...gathering various information from various source, and you think you know many things, but you don't know anything at all. That is quite usual. So we should not be...our understanding of Buddhism should not be just gathering many information and knowledge. Instead of gathering various knowledge we should accept it as you listen to something which you have already known, or you have already knew. This is so-called emptiness or you may say omniscient self...you know everything. You are like a dark sky...some time a flashing come through the dark sky and you forget all about it. After flashing gets through it there is nothing, but the sky will not be surprised even though thunderbolt break out all of a sudden. It does not make...it will not cause any surprise for the sky. But when the lightning hits though we will see the wonderful sight of it, but we do not...we are not... we are always prepared for watching the flashing.

People may be interested in various sights and they may go for sight seeing tour, but some Chinese said, "Rosan is a famous place for its misty scenery". I haven't been to China yet but there must be beautiful mountains, and white clouds or mist may come and go through the mountains. It must be very wonderful sight. Although it is wonderful sight, he says, "Rosan is famous for its hazy sight on a rainy day. Seko, the great river, is famous for its tide coming and going." That's all. That's all but splendid. This is how

we appreciate things. We should not expect various information, just...on the other hand we should not accept various information just as the (echo?) of ourself. But we should not be surprised at seeing something and hearing something. If you accept things as an echo of yourself it does not make any sense. So, "Rosan is famous for its misty sight" does not mean to see the mountain...to appreciate the mountain recollecting some scenery you have seen before. "It is not so wonderful. I have seen that sight before" or, "I have painted much more beautiful paintings. Rosan is nothing". This is not our way. We appreciate with quite new feeling. We do not accept it as an echo of ourselves. Even though you have various knowledge, if you accept the knowledge as if you collect something familiar to you only. For collection it will be very good but that is not our way. Or we will not try to surprise people by some wonderful treasures. That is not our way at all. We should not be interested in something special but we should appreciate... if you want to appreciate something fully you should forget yourself even, and you should accept it as utter darkness of the sky...accept lightning.

Sometime we think it is impossible for us to understand something...something unfamiliar to us. Some people may say, "It is almost impossible to understand what is Buddhism as our cultural background is quite different from Oriental cultural background. How is it possible to understand Oriental thought?" But this is wrong. Although the background of the...of course Buddhism in our heritage cannot be separated from the cultural background. It is true, but if Buddhism...if a Buddhist come to the United States, I am not already a Japanese. I am living in your cultural background. I am taking nearly the same food as you take and I am communicating with you. So for the people who have some narrow-minded people may say it is impossible, but it is possible. Even though you do not understand me so well it...I want to understand what you are talking about. I can understand – maybe more than many people who can speak and understand English. That is true. If we could...if I can understand several words in long sentence it is all the better, but even though I cannot understand

English at all I think I can communicate with you. So in this way there is possibility as long as we exist in utter darkness of the sky...world...as long as we live in emptiness. I always say we must be very patient if we want to understand Buddhism. But I think...I was seeking for some good word for patience. And I think it's better to say...to translate it as 'constancy'. 'Constancy' is better than 'patience'. 'Patience' means to force something on...to be forced for some time...that is 'patience'. But 'constancy' means constant facility or ability, or possibility to accept things. There is no particular effort, but constant ability or facility we have to know...to accept. For people who has no idea of emptiness it may be all what they practice should be...may be patience, but for the people who know, even just intuitively what is emptiness, all what we do, even though it is very difficult you can resolve the problem by constant ability or facility.

So that is what we mean by (ning?) in Chinese (or Japanese). So I think it's better to interpret ning constancy. This is our way of practice, and continuous practice. If so, even after you attain enlightenment it is necessary for us to have another enlightenment, and one after another we have to have enlightenment. If possible...moment after moment we have to have enlightenment. That is enlightenment before you attain enlightenment, and after you attain enlightenment.