

August 12, 1965
Rev. S Suzuki lecture

Lecture on Posture

I want to explain about our posture we take. When you sit left foot is on your right side, and right foot is on your left side. This is full lotus posture. When we cross our legs like this, although we have right and left foot, it is actually become one. So it means oneness of the duality. Not two, not one. This is the most important teaching. Not two and not one. Our body and mind is not two and not one. If you think our body and mind is two that is wrong. If you think your mind and body is one that is also wrong. Because our mind and body is two and one. We call it oneness of our duality. In...usually, if it is not one, it is two or four. If it is not singular it is plural. If it is not plural it is singular. But in actual experience of life, our life is not plural, not only plural, but also singular. Each one of us are independent and dependent. We...after some years we will die. That will be the end of our life but if we just think that is our end of life that is wrong understanding. And if we think we do not die, that is also wrong understanding. We die and we do not die and that is right understanding.

Some people may say, “our mind or our soul exists forever but my physical body will die”. But this is not exactly right because both mind and body has their end and at the same time it is eternal existence. And even though we say mind and body it is actually two sides of the one coin. This is right understanding.

So when we take this posture it symbolizes this truth. Here (demonstrating) I have left foot on right side of my body and right foot on left side of my body so I don't know which side it is. So this is left side and right side. When I cross our hand like this ---by the way, when we form cosmic mudra your middle finger comes to here and it should not be like this or like this. We call it cosmic mudra. We have many many mudras symbolizing the teaching. This is one of the mudras. And your ears and shoulders are on one line. It means to keep your back straight, spine straight. And you pull down on your shoulders. In this way you will have good circulation on your back.

If you try to be ...if you try to keep this posture you will find some difficulty in taking your natural breathing, but by the time you get accustomed to the right posture you can take natural deep breathing. And pull your chin in. This is a very important point. If you sit in this way (head tilted up) you will never gain strength in your posture. This is a rather dreamy posture. You are dreaming of something. The most important point is to own your physical body. If you take this posture (slumping) you will lose your body. Your body is somewhere else and your mind too. Your mind and body is wandering somewhere. This is not the way.

We must exist right here. The key point is this. You must have your mind and body --- Everything should exist in the right place. When every existence in right place in right way there is no problem but if this (the microphone) exists somewhere else it doesn't serve its own purpose. So every thing should be located in the right place in the right way. That is the conclusion of Buddhism.

How every thing exists in the right place is when we have our body and mind everything else will exist in the right place. So the point is to have our body and mind is the most important point. There is no need to change the place they exist. The most important point is for us to exist in right place in right way. If we exist in right place in right way, everything exists in right place in right way. But usually without being aware of this point we try to change something else where it exists. That is wrong. Even though you try to do something you cannot organize your life. But when you do things in the right way at right time everything else will be organized. When the boss is sleeping, everyone is sleeping. When the boss do something right, everyone will do every thing right, at the right time. That is the secret of Buddhism.

So your posture should not be leaned over backward. You should be straight. You should not be this way or the other way. You should be straight. Our spine should be vertical. This is not just form. It express the key point of Buddhism. If you understand the key point....if you want to understand, truly, really, actually we should practice this practice. Those forms is not the means of obtaining right state of mind. To take this posture itself is our purpose or practice. It is not some means of obtaining some special state of mind. When you have this posture you have right state of mind. So there is no need to obtain some special state of mind. This point is also very important.

When you try to attain something your mind starts to wandering about somewhere else. If you try to attain your mind will start to wander and your mind isn't here.

So, try not to attain something. When you do not try to attain something you have your body and your mind. Zen master will say, “Kill the Buddha”. Kill the Buddha if the Buddha exists somewhere else. Kill the Buddha because you should resume to your own Buddha nature. If the Buddha exists somewhere else kill the Buddha, don’t see the Buddha. To do something is to express our nature. We do not exist by means of, for the sake of something. We exist for sake of ourselves. And this fundamental teaching will be expressed in various ways. When we stand we have some rules but this rule is not...each one of us has our own way of standing, strictly speaking, so we measure how we stand by our body, not measure. This is your own body measurement. So when you want to know how you stand up we measure here, by the feet, and from here to here (should be from here to here). And our body is always the same posture you take in zazen. Put some strength here – diaphragm – and you hold your thumb inside. You feel as if you have some round pillar here. Round big temple pillar and so you cannot be like this...pillar is here. When you take this posture there is no need to talk about right state of mind. You have right state of mind. And when you bow, strictly speaking, right knee (first) left. And nod three times and lift you hands. Then left (knee) right.

Anyway, what I want to say is your posture is very important, so try to be always in right posture, not only when you practice zazen, even though you are driving, I want you to take right posture. When you read, if you read in this posture (slumping) you cannot stay long. Try. You will find how important it is to take right posture. And that is the teaching. The teaching which is written on the paper

is not true teaching. That is a kind of food for your brain. Not for yourself. It is necessary to take some food for your brain. It is necessary, but the more important thing is to be yourself by right way of life. That is why Buddha could not accept the religion before Buddha. He tried various religions. He studied many religions, but he could not satisfied with philosophy. He could not satisfied with asceticism and until he found out right understanding of life, and right practice of religious life he did not interested some metaphysical existence. When he found out this, he, himself, he found out tht everything exists has Buddha nature. That is his enlightenment. Enlightenment is not some good feeling or some particular state of mind. You must believe in the state of mind when you sit in this posture is itself enlightenment. If you cannot satisfied with the state of mind you have in sitting posture it means your mind is still wandering about. Our mind and body should not be wandering about. Wobbling.

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