

December 2, 1965
Rev. S. Suzuki
Thursday morning lecture

(After demonstration of Buddhist bow) To bow is very important—one of the important practice. By bow we can eliminate our selfish, self-centered idea. My teacher had hard skin on his forehead because he bowed and bowed and bowed so many times and he knew that he was very obstinate, stubborn fellow, so he bowed and bowed and bowed and he always heard his master's scolding voice. That is why he bowed. And he joined our order when he was thirty. For Japanese priest to join the order at the age of thirty is not early. So his master always called him 'You lately-joined fellow'. He said, 'Japanese phrase missing in transcript'.... It means priest who joined our order when he is old. When we join order when we are young we have little...it is easy to get rid of our selfishness. But when we have very stubborn, selfish idea it is rather hard to get rid of it. So he was always scolded because he joined our order so late. To scold does not mean slight people, or it does not mean to...actually his teacher was not actually scolding him. His master loved him very much because of his stubborn character.

When he was seventy he said, "I...when I was young I was like a tiger but now I am a cat." He was very pleased to be a cat and to be like a cat. 'Now I am cat', he said. And to bow means to eliminate our self-centered idea. It is not so....actually it is not so difficult...easy...and although it is difficult to try to get rid of it is very valuable practice. The result is not the point but effort to improve ourselves is valuable. There is no end in our practice.

We have four vows – although sentient being is innumerable, we have to save...we vow to save them (that is one). Although evil desires are limitless, but we vow to get rid of it (that is second) and although the teaching is limitless, but we vow to study. Although Buddhism is unattainable, we should attain it. That is four vows. If it is unattainable, how can we attain it? But we should. That is Buddhism. Because it is possible we will do it. That is not Buddhism. Even though it is impossible we have to do it if it is our true nature. Whether it is possible or not is not the point. If we want to do it we have to do it even though it is impossible. So whether it is possible to get rid of our self-centered idea or not is not the point. Anyway we have to try to get rid of it. When we make this effort there is our appeasement, there our Nirvana. There is no other way to attain calmness of your mind than to do it...than to try to do it. If you...when you thinking about...before you decide...determine to do it you have difficulty but if you start to do it there is no difficulty – there is appeasement, there is calmness of your mind. So calmness of your mind should be found in...real calmness should be found in activity. Calmness of your mind does not mean to stop our activity. In our activity there is true calmness. So we say, 'It is easy to have in inactivity, but it is hard to have calmness in our activity, but calmness in activity is true calmness.

(a few sentences did not record properly at this point in the tape)

As to progress...we don't know how much progress we made, actually, but if you practice it you will realize...some day you will realize that our progress is not...it is not possible to make rapid, extraordinary progress. Even though you try very hard, you cannot actually make progress. The progress you make is always little by little. It is like...to go through fog. You don't know when you get wet, but if you just walk through fog you will be wet, little by little, even though you don't know...it is not like a shower.

When you go out when it is showering you will feel, ‘Oh, that’s terrible!’ It is not so bad but when you get wet by fog it is very difficult to dry yourself. This is how we make progress. So actually there is not need to worry about your progress. Just to do it is the way. It is, maybe, like to study language. Just repeating, you will master it. You cannot do it all of a sudden. This is how we practice, especially Soto way, is to do it little by little. To make progress little by little. Or we do not even mind, we do not expect to make progress, just to do it is our way. The point is to do it with sincerity in each moment. That is the point. There should not be Nirvana besides our practice.