

Rev. S. Suzuki
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In (Agoma?) Sutra there is a funny story. A man who had... There was a man who had four wives. One wife always lived with him and he complied with everything that she wanted, providing good furniture for her rooms and everything. Whatever she wanted he bought it for her. And the second wife was... he did not like the second wife so much, but when she was not with him he missed her very much and when he did not see her he felt very uneasy. That was the second wife. The third one was almost like the second, but the difference was that whenever something serious happened to him he would go and talk to her about what had happened to him. And once in awhile on New Years Day or Christmas, he would visit her or she would visit his home. That was the third one and the fourth one was like a servant. She was with him always, and helped him like a servant but he never said, 'Thank you' to her. That was the fourth one.

I was rather interested in this story. Moreover, when the man was going to die he felt so lonely that he asked the first wife to die with him. But the first wife refused. And so he asked the second one to go to heaven or hell with him, but she said, "Why should I go with you when the first wife refused. So I won't go". And the third one said... the third one, who had not much relationship between them, of course refused him, but when he asked the fourth one to die with him she said, "Of course I will. When I was... when I came to you I already fixed my mind to be with you forever, so I will die with you."

And in the Sutra it was told that the first wife is your body, and the second one is your possessions, and the third one is your relative, and the fourth one is your

mind. With your body you enjoy your life very much, and sometimes when you are quite strong you can enjoy your life. You will have a pretty luxurious life with much money. But if you haven't much money you will miss your money. My friend who has a lot of property and money, after the Second World War, he had to offer his property to the government, and he became very poor. And he felt very bad. And I said to him, "I haven't had any money from the beginning and I don't feel so bad. Why do you feel so unhappy?" And he said, "Oh, you don't know how you feel." When someone loses some money or some property, that feeling is quite different feeling from the feeling you have if you never had any money. Even though you have no money and I have no money, the situation is the same, but you will miss it if you had it. So in this way we will miss our property. But our relatives will not help us completely, but our mind will...is always with us. Here, by mind the scripture means big mind. Although we have it we do not realize it. However hard our mind helps us, we do not say even, 'Thank you'.

Our practice is like this. When we practice something we are apt to practice in some way to live with the first wife, or the second, or the third. No one tries to live with the fourth one because you do not know where she is, and you are not aware of the big mind. So that is why people ask me what is the advantage of practicing zazen, or what kind of merit you have in your practice. "What are you doing just sitting on your black cushion?" they ask me. Even though you continue our practice for a long time our practice tends to lose the point of practice. We don't know when we start the wrong practice but if you are not sincere, or faithful enough, or if you are not careful your practice will go astray. If you continue your practice for one year you will continue it anyway but in that case what we should be careful about is whether we are continuing because you practiced for one year...you have been practicing for one year. In that case

your practice is not pure; because the reason why you continue your practice is based on past practice. You have some idea...some substantial idea about your practice...that you have had. But pure practice should be renewed everyday. When you practice our way this morning, you should forget all about the practice you had...you have had, and you should practice it as if you had started your practice this morning. That is so-called 'beginner's mind'. We should always be a beginner or else our practice is not pure. And if you have gaining idea in your practice, that is not pure practice. So whether or not you are aware of the big mind, we should say, 'Thank you' for the big mind. That is our practice. Anyway the big mind is always with you so there is no need to seek for the big mind, which you have always with you. The only thing you should do is that you should be grateful for the big mind. That is actually our pure practice. In this way we should continue our pure practice and we should be very careful not to lose the point of practice, not to go astray.

In your practice, if you want to make some effort, your effort should be directed to keeping your posture right, or to have deep breathing, or to put some strength in your tummy. This is all that you should do, but as you have experienced, to have right posture, and to have right breathing is not different thing. It is the same practice. Without right posture you cannot take right breathing. Without some deep breathing your bodily activities will not be one with your mental activities. When you are one with your mind and body your physical effort should be controlled in perfect harmony. This is how we practice our way.

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