

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

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

Student A: I thought what she was saying was that once we stood up, we were supposed to stand there without—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, you know, 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*, you know, walk, you know, so that you give them— You know, if you walk too slowly or if you have too much, you know, distance, between you and someone ahead of you, that will make other person difficult to walk, so you should be careful, you know, *abo-* [partial word]—about distance between you and a person ahead of you. So keep certain, you know, distance. And if, you know, someone like me, you know, walk—naturally I walk slowly, you know. That will give others some difficulties. And as I walk very slowly, we—I will have big distance from [laughs] a person who is walking ahead of me.

So if you—if you have too much distance in between, you know, catch up to the person. That is, you know, very small things, but that kind of small things is pretty important to—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—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 more stable practice for us, especially those who are involved in busy, everyday life. It is 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—to practice with the students who you—whom you [are] acquainted with. Even though you do not communicate by words, you know, just to be with them, you know, will be a big encouragement. Verbal, you know communication tend to be very superficial, but when you don't [laughs] speak, you know, your communication between you will be very much encouraged, and your mind become—will become very subtle. And your intuition will be open by staying [in] silence. This is very—just to stay, without saying—stay here without saying anything for five days with you is already very meaningful. That is why we do not talk.

We, you know, when we [are] involved in some superficial interesting matters, because of some special interest, your true feeling will be covered by the—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 that kind of practice will—through this kind of practice you will have more, you know, intuitive understanding of teaching, and your intuition will be improved.

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

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

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

Of course, for—especially for beginners it may be difficult to stay silent or not to read even newspapers. You may be very—you may be very—very much bored, so—[laughs, laughter] [sounds of nearby hammering]. You know, 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 [door slams nearby] will be taken care of mostly by old students, you know. In, you know, in *sesshin*, usually, everything will be taken care of by old student, and old student help, you know, new st-

[partial word]—must help new students to practice more. And so old students, you know, take care of many things: serving meals for you, and giving some instructions, and carrying sticks. Those things will be—should be well taken care [of] by old students.

Try anyway. Sit [laughs], you know, and see what will happen to you [laughter]. And try to keep right posture according to the instruction. Important things is to follow the rules, you know. This is very important. "To follow rules" means to find, you know, to let you find your—yourself, you know. If, you know, there is no rules, it is difficult for you, you know, to find yourself because you don't know whe- [partial word]—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, you know, 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, you know, without doing anything. So rules is something you should understand. Rules is something which you—which help you, you know. That is rules. Instead of, you know, restricting you by some, you know, 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 *kō-* [partial word]—*kōan* practice. But I recommend you to, maybe this time, you know, following breathing practice.

Student B: Following breathing—

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh.

Student B: —or counting?

Suzuki-rōshi: If—if, you know—when you find it difficult to count, you know—no, no, to follow your breathing, counting breathing will, you know, may help you because if you count your breathing, you know exactly what you are doing. Or when you—your practice get lost, immediately, you will, you know, know it. So that will—will be a—it—that will help you. So—but following breathing is good.

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

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm. And at that time, don't, you know—don't

make too much effort in, you know, in making your breathing slow down or, you know, making faster or anything like that. Just—if you just follow your breathing, then naturally, your—your breathing will be good, you know, appropriate for your practice, without—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, you know.

Student C: Every day?

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

Dan Welch: Just—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 do you—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—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 [4-6 words unclear]. [Laughter.]

Suzuki-rōshi: Actually then, I created one more problem [laughter]. I said, you know, so that you—you may not be, you know, 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 know, we have various—you will listen [to] various instructions, you know, but what I am saying is instruction will be given to you so that, you know—to help you, you know, 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, you know. Or it does not mean you should do this or you shouldn't do this. You know, you may have various intr- [partial word]—instructions, but if you, you know, 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: The ha- [partial word]—before you go—for those of you who have never had *dokusan* before, the *jisha*, right, the person you—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].

Source: City Center transcript. Entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997.
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