

July 15, 1965

Rev. S. Suzuki's talk on Great Prajna Paramita Sutra

This morning I want to explain the attainment—the attainment here. It means to resume to our true nature is actually attainment. To attain nirvana means to resume to our true nature. Our true nature is beyond our reasoning, beyond our sensory world. When we are beyond our reasoning, or sensory world there is no problem, there is no fear. There is just our true nature itself. When we resume to our true nature we say we attained enlightenment. So actually there is nothing to attain; to resume to our true nature is our attainment. But from the viewpoint of initial awareness of the true nature it is attainment, because we will attain—we will resume to our true nature by going beyond our sensual world or sensory world, so step by step, one by one, to get rid of all the emotional functions and thinking—stop thinking we will attain enlightenment. So in this sense it is attainment. But, what we attain is not something quite different from our empirical world, so in this sense it is not attainment. So in this sutra it says “no attainment (or no dharma), no five senses or sense organs, or no world of five or six senses; no problem of birth and death, and old age and illness. Of course no self at all.

If there is no small self there is no problem. When we have no self there is nirvana. The realm where there is no problem is called nirvana. Nirvana—from the viewpoint of initial awareness, it is a state of no frame of mind; calmness of our mind is nirvana. This nirvana... viewpoint of initial awareness state—from negative viewpoint it is the calmness, but from positive viewpoint it is the origin of all our activities. All our activities is supported by this state of mind even though you are taking activity, strong activity, there must be calmness of your mind, or you will be lost in your activity.

If you obtain calmness even though you are in strong fierce activity, you will be lost if you have no calmness of your mind. So calmness should be found rather in zazen, rather in activity. You should find out the calmness in your activity rather than in your sitting posture.

And why we sit is because there is no other way to appease your innate nature. Perhaps you think it may be better to take some medicine, rather than to sit, but even though you take medicine, even though you obtain the calmness of your mind when you take some medicine, you will not be satisfied with it. You have deep, deep request. To appease that deep request the medicine is not strong enough or good enough. Even though you take medicine you want something more, you know.

Now my mind is very calm, but I want something more. Because you have inner, strong desire, you don't know how to appease it. It is just as you take food when you are hungry. Even though you take food, that is not enough. In California you have various fruits which is very delicious and beautiful. So we Japanese think, “If I go to California I

will take as much fruits as I can, best fruits” but we find out that even though we eat the best fruits in California, that is not enough and we are rather disappointed with myself or with fruits. I don’t know which. The fruit is not good enough to appease my hunger... not hunger maybe. I don’t know what it is but we have some inmost request. So actually something which appease your inmost request is not something which you eat, which you see, which you feel; or is not something which is called your desire or instinct. We don’t know what it is, but we have some deep request, and this request is very, very deep and everyone has this kind of request. This is called our inmost nature—nature which will take various forms, which is the origin of all our activity—mental and physical.

The only way is to give up all the appeasement, all the medicine, all the way which is supposed to be effective, and to give up our desires even. When we give up everything, we will have direct insight of the hunger, direct insight of our instinct. When we know what is our inmost request, then all the things you eat, all the things you do, or see will serve as an appeasement—to appease your inmost request. That is why we sit.

Some people say, “My mind is not calm enough to sit this morning so I rather stay in bed.” This is opposite. Even though you stay, if your desire is not so strong, it may be better to stay in bed. But if you find out what is our inmost request, you cannot stay in bed. You have to do something. Even though you do something it will not work. If you hit your head, or smash you hand and feet, it will not work. In this case, the best way is to sit. This is the best way.

And we should know that all those temporal means of appeasing our inmost request is not good enough. We should know that. That is why we sit, because we know all those temporal means of appeasing our request is not good enough.

So, when we sit, we have attainment. When we sit we have nirvana. All the Buddhas, past and present and future will attain supreme enlightenment by this practice, by this wisdom, wisdom what is the inmost nature of our selves. And they attained supreme enlightenment. A NOKU TA RA SAN MYAKU SAN BO DAI is perfect enlightenment. So, we know that, we learn that this wisdom of true nature is great, holy mantra; and great mantra and supreme mantra, and this is incomparable mantra; and this mantra will appease our request, and it will help our suffering, and it is true, and it is true itself, and it is not false, not fake, not temporal. It is true, and permanent way to attain nirvana. So we recite this sutra of wisdom, as follow: “Gone, gone to the other shore, gone, or reach enlightenment, and accomplish enlightenment.”

This is supposed to be the meaning of this Sanskrit words; “GYA TE GYA TE HA RA GYA TE HARA SO GYA TE BO DHI SO WA KA.”

I don’t know Sanskrit so much, so I will just explain this interpretation—this is

D. T. Suzuki's interpretation. "Gone, gone, to the other shore." To the other shore does not mean, figuratively speaking to the other shore. But to go to the other shore means to resume to our true nature, or to find out—to realize our true nature. But this realization is not awareness or some experience by thinking, or by feeling, or by five or six sense organs. By direct experience we will know what it is. That direct, genuine experience is the experience before any thinking activity or feeling activity arises. In other words, when you just sit, you have this feeling.

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