

EXCERPTS FROM
*To Shine One Corner of the World:
Moments with Shunryu Suzuki*¹

EDITED BY David Chadwick

DAVID CHADWICK WRITES in the introduction to his book:

“Suzuki’s main teaching was silent—the way he picked up a teacup or met someone walking on a path or in a hallway, or how he joined with his students in work, meals, and meditation. But when the occasion arose to speak, he made an impression. This book is a record of such impressions, each brief exchange stored away in the mind of an individual who carried it along for thirty years or more. Their glimpses of Suzuki Roshi show that his way was not systematic or formulaic. He emphasized that the ungraspable spirit of Buddhism is what continues, while the expression of that spirit always changes. The teachings of Buddha, he said, were for particular moments, people, and situations and were relative and imperfect.”

The following are excerpted from *To Shine One Corner of the World*:

On a visit to the East Coast, Suzuki Roshi arrived at the meeting place of the Cambridge Buddhist Society to find everyone scrubbing down the interior in anticipation of his visit. They were surprised to see him, because he had written that he would arrive the following day.

He tied back the sleeves of his robe and insisted on joining the preparations “for the grand day of my arrival.” [TOLD BY ELSIE MITCHELL]

Once while driving Suzuki Roshi back to San Francisco from Los Altos, I asked him if there was much hope for that handful of middle-aged, suburban housewives to accomplish anything as Zen students. After all, I thought,

¹ Copyright © 2001 by David Chadwick. Reprinted, with permission, from *To Shine One Corner of the World: Moments with Shunryu Suzuki* (New York: Broadway Books, 2001).

they only sat together once a week, unlike we students, who sat daily at Zen Center.

He told me their understanding was "actually pretty good," and he noted, "They don't seem to suffer from arrogance." [TOLD BY BOB HALPERN.]

Zen Center was a magnet for sixties counterculture arrivals to the San Francisco Bay area. An older woman asked Suzuki Roshi if he felt any pressure and difficulty with the various ragged, longhaired students who came off the streets seeking enlightenment. "I am very grateful for them," he said. "I will do all I can for them." [TOLD BY ROWENA PATTEE.]

As I was telling Suzuki Roshi what a disaster my life had become, he began to chuckle. I found myself laughing along with him. There was a pause. I asked him what I should do.

"Sit zazen," he replied. "Life without zazen is like winding your clock without setting it. It runs perfectly well, but it doesn't tell time." [TOLD BY SYDNEY WALTER.]

