

Selections from Nurtured by Love

Suzuki Shin'ichi

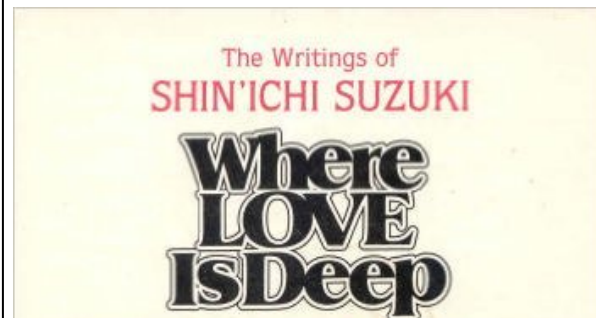
Translated by Kyoko Selden with Lili Selden and introduced by Lili Selden



Suzuki Shin'ichi Leads a Children's Violin Group. Suzuki Association

For more than three decades, Kyoko Selden was deeply involved in the Talent Education (Sainō kyōiku) movement, as a parent of three string-playing children and the translator of major books and articles on the Suzuki Method. Developed in the thirties and forties by the violinist Suzuki Shin'ichi (1898-1998), the Suzuki Method teaches children classical music as a means to enrich their lives while also enhancing their motor skills, concentration, memory, and self-discipline. Suzuki, who had studied the violin in Germany in the twenties, was one day struck by the capacity of children to master their native languages. Against the conventional wisdom that only certain people were graced with the talent to master musical instruments, Suzuki declared that anyone who could speak a language with facility had the potential to become a refined

performer—whether amateur or professional—of music.



Translated by Kyoko Selden

Book Cover of *Where Love is Deep: The Writings of Suzuki Shin'ichi*. Translated by Kyoko Selden (New Albany, IN: World-Wide Press, 1982)

The Suzuki Method, having attracted hundreds of instructors and tens of thousands of students throughout Japan in the postwar years, arrived on the North American music education scene to great acclaim in the early sixties. Shortly thereafter, Waltraud Suzuki's translation into English of Suzuki's autobiography, *Nurtured by Love* (Ai ni ikiru), appeared, providing a clear statement of its philosophy and its leader's persona. Other books and articles about the Method's tenets and their application followed.

In 1976, a Suzuki violin program, directed by Rose Martin, was inaugurated at the St. Louis Conservatory and School for the Arts (CASA). Kyoko, as a high school and university student, had loved music enough to defy her parents by secretly taking piano lessons. She enrolled her children in the violin program, excited about the resonance between the method and her own educational philosophy, honed as a teacher of Japanese language and literature at Washington University and later Cornell. These commonalities included a commitment: (1) to use authentic materials (rather than artificial exercises) to challenge and inspire students, (2) to set high standards but encourage and motivate students through positive reinforcement, and (3) to refrain from making judgments about a student's capacity to excel—someday in some particular field—based on the student's initial attempts to master specific material or skills.

Kyoko soon met Eiko and Masayoshi Kataoka, members of the St. Louis Symphony, who taught Suzuki violin and cello at their home. In 1980, the Kataokas launched *Talent Education Journal*, a quarterly providing English-language translations of the work of Suzuki and other instructors, not to mention their students and students' parents. Kyoko translated nearly every article published in the journal for over a decade, in addition to creating paper cuts and sketches to illustrate it.

She also translated other books and

instructional materials by Suzuki and his inner circle. Eventually, at the request of the International Suzuki Association, an umbrella organization with representatives from many of the regional Suzuki programs worldwide, she undertook a complete translation of *Nurtured by Love* for the new millennium. This new translation, published in spring 2013, has since become the basis for forthcoming translations into other languages.

Below are excerpts from that translation, chosen by her co-translator, Lili Selden, illustrated with Kyoko Selden's original paper cuts.

Foreword: A Day of Marveling



Children Throughout Japan Speak Japanese!

"Ohh! Children everywhere in Japan are speaking Japanese!"

I leaped up in astonishment. Each and every child speaks Japanese freely, and they do so without any difficulty whatsoever. Isn't this a

marvelous ability? Why is this? How has this come to pass? I could barely suppress my impulse to run into the streets, shouting.

For about a week following this revelation, I spoke to everyone I met.

“All children throughout Japan speak Japanese magnificently. Children from Osaka speak that difficult Osaka dialect, and children from the Northeast speak that Northeastern dialect we could never even hope to reproduce. Isn’t this impressive?”

But nobody was impressed. It’s a matter of course, everyone said. Instead of being surprised by the fact that every child demonstrates such ability, people were half surprised and half appalled by the fuss I was making about something that is common sense.

However, this discovery held enormous significance for me. It happened one day over thirty years ago, when I was thirty-three or four. And this discovery not only solved a problem I was confronting at the time but came to form the basis that determined my life thereafter.

I believe it was around 1931. I was only teaching youths at the Teikoku and Kunitachi Music Academies, but a four-year old boy appeared at my office door, accompanied by his father. It was Etō Toshiya, now a fine violinist.¹

Whence this Marvelous Phenomenon?

Having brought along the four-year old Toshiya, his father said, “I’d like to entrust my child to you.” He was asking me to teach his son the violin. I was at a complete loss as to how I ought to nurture such a young child, or what I might teach him. I had never had such an experience.

What kind of approach would serve me best in teaching a four-year old? — I pondered this question day and night.

That became the starting point leading to my discovery. At the time, my brothers and I had formed a quartet, and one day while we were rehearsing at my younger brother’s place, it flashed into my head: every child throughout Japan speaks Japanese.

For me, that realization was the proverbial light on a moonless night.

Children freely speak Japanese, I realized, because they are, in effect, given the opportunity to do so. There is the fact of training and education behind their capacity to speak. Therein lay a proper educational method. Every child, without question, is developing appropriately. This was precisely that perfect educational method I was seeking. An educational method that ensured the development of Japanese children already existed everywhere in Japan.

Awakening to this fact left me astonished.

Children who are called dull because they are poor at math, too, speak Japanese with absolute freedom. This is strange, is it not? The reason for their ineptitude at math, then, is not that they are dull. What is at fault is the methods by which they are being taught. It is not that these children have no talent, but rather that their talent has not been cultivated.

Yet another surprise for me was that nobody else was aware of this fact despite its being clearly visible before human eyes since ancient times. Nevertheless, what made me leap up in astonishment was another fact even prior to that one. When I tried organizing my thoughts, I came up with the following.

Herein Lie the Keys to Developing Ability

(1) As far as mother-tongue education goes, children who earn low marks at school and are called dull by birth have acquired superior ability to speak Japanese.

(2) In other words, an educational method for successful development has been applied to every child. Contained among the pedagogical conditions of first-language acquisition that are in effect from the day a child is born, I found, was a method to overshadow every other painstakingly thought-out method.

(3) All children, without exception, flourish in response to skillful teaching. They are born equipped with that potential.

I thought here was the key to human development, or more precisely, ability development. I had unexpectedly run into a wall upon being requested to teach the four-year old Etō Toshiya, and having thought every which way through the challenge, I now awoke with tremendous excitement to this “mother-tongue educational method.”

Fueled by my certain belief that every child thrives, I have worked continuously for thirty-odd years within an educational movement that creates no dropouts, and that I have named “Talent Education.” That day of wonderment became the start of my inquiry into humanity. As to where that path has led me, I would like to discuss it as enjoyably and concretely as possible, while reflecting on the past and hoping for the future.

My Encounter with Tolstoy



Bitter Chagrin at Having Deceived Myself

I believe that the foundation of my adult life came into being in the year that I turned seventeen. In a sense, I think I can say that I was born then. For this reason, although I have spoken to many people and have also written about what happened in that year before I graduated from commercial school, I am unable to convey my approach to life without referring to the events in question. I therefore will repeat myself at the risk of boring some readers.

One day I went into the office of my father’s factory, where a thousand employees were at work. I caught sight of an English language typewriter, a novelty for me, and casually hit some keys. The head of the shipping section came by and cautioned me: “Shin’ichi, you don’t want to strike the keys when it’s not loaded with paper.”

“I’m just pretend-typing.” Caught on the spot, I fibbed.

“Oh, I see.” Without ado, the section head left the room. He was no sooner out of sight than I was seized by intense anger and regret. “What a coward!” I berated myself. “Why did you lie when you should have humbly apologized?”

Unable to bear it, I went home right away but I could not remain still. I went out to Nagoya’s broadest street. Perhaps wishing to forget the discomfort that obsessed me, I found myself entering a bookstore and arbitrarily began to pick up random books from the shelves. It was in the process of flipping through them that I encountered Tolstoy, wholly by chance—or, as I prefer to think of it, in accordance with my destiny.

“The Voice of One’s Conscience Is the Voice of God”

The book in question was a small one, titled *The Diaries of Tolstoy*. Without forethought, I took it from the shelf and distractedly opened a

page. Right then and there, my eyes alighted on the following sentence: “To deceive oneself is worse than to deceive another.”

The stern words pierced my heart and shook me to the core. I barely managed to fight the trembling in my entire body. I bought the little book, ran home, and pored over it. Starting that day, I read and re-read the volume until it literally fell apart.

Tolstoy—what an exemplary human being. This feeling of awe led me to avidly read his entire oeuvre. My self-formation thus proceeded with Tolstoy as my sustenance. *The Diaries of Tolstoy* never, under any circumstances, left my side. No matter where I went, I brought the volume with me. When I went to Germany to study several years later, at age twenty-three, this book was in my chest pocket.

Tolstoy warned against self-deception and equated the voice of conscience with the voice of God. I was firmly convinced of the need to lead my life in accordance with this Tolstoyan philosophy.

Work, Reading, and Playing with Children

At the same time, I began to occupy myself less with schoolwork, studying only enough to avoid failing my examinations. Capturing my attention, instead, were books that explored how to leading a meaningful life; for example, the essays of Francis Bacon and other Western philosophical writings. Probably this interest, too, reflects how my mind worked under Tolstoy’s influence.

Around the same time, I eagerly devoured the analects of the thirteenth-century Priest Dōgen (1200-53). His *On Training and Enlightenment* (Shūshōgi, compiled in 1890) begins with the phrase, “To clarify life and to clarify death—this is a matter of the greatest importance for every Buddhist. If there is the Buddha in life and death, there is neither life nor death. . . .” I began adopting a lifestyle in

which I found the greatest pleasure in reading such books, perspiring amidst the factory workers at my father’s plant, and befriending and playing with the children in our neighborhood.

Later, my study and appreciation of Mozart’s music led me away from the notion of Tolstoy’s “conscience” toward an understanding of the workings of the “life force” itself as the source of every aspect of human existence; but I believe that the foundation of this conceptualization, too, was formed when I was around seventeen.

The existence of young children, which is nothing less than the joy of burgeoning life, came alive in my heart. Eastern philosophy, which pronounces us all to be endowed with life through the grace of nature, took root within me. This, I would say, was the process that informed my late teens.

Here Was the Source of Talent Education

Back then, I often played with neighborhood children. Whenever they spotted me coming home from elsewhere, they all came running down the street to me. Taking their hands in mine, I led them to the Suzuki home for hours of fun with them and my younger sister and brothers. I was simply fond of children. Presumably due to having been baptized by Tolstoy, I had come to discern such a quality of preciousness in four- and five-year olds that at times I nearly felt like joining my palms in veneration.

Young children never deceive themselves.

They believe in others without the slightest hint of doubt.

They know only how to love, not how to hate.

They love justice, and zealously adhere to rules.

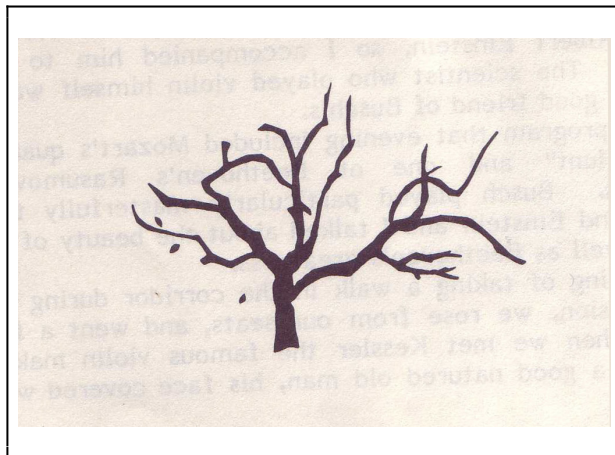
Seeking joy, they live vibrantly and cheerfully.

Unfamiliar with anxiety, they live in a constant state of blissful assurance.

Before long, I discovered that playtime with the neighborhood children was actually a useful learning opportunity for me. I longed to keep alive within me the unself-conscious human posture I observed in those children. A revolution had swept through me. I feel that Talent Education, which was eventually to be my life's work, began then.

Many of the world's beautiful children turn out to be adults who harbor suspicion, distrust, injustice, hatred, strife, unhappiness, and darkness. Why is that? Is it simply impossible to help them retain their beautiful hearts as they mature into adulthood? This was the source of my belief that our educational strategies must certainly be flawed.

What Is the Use of Merely Knowing?



Sound Breathes Life—Without Form It Lives.

One morning in 1953, I received a phone call from a newspaper informing me of the death of Jacques Thibaud (1880-1953). The airplane carrying him had crashed in the Alps. I was asked to comment on the news, but such was my shock that I could scarcely respond. I stood motionless with the phone in my hand; it was the kind of shock one feels when notified of the loss of an immeasurably close, dear friend.

After the fierce shock subsided, I reflected on my sorrow with quiet tears. I had never met Thibaud. But before I even realized it, he had come to live within me. I loved and admired his violin playing, and from listening to his performances on record albums for over twenty years, I had sensed his character and studied his methods of musical expression and violin technique. Through music . . . through tone, Thibaud had, at some point unbeknownst to me, begun to live within me, and I was soon cultivating an unforgettable love and respect for him. Music . . . tone. What miraculous power it has!

It was on this occasion of Thibaud's passing that I awoke to a fact: humans do not live through wisdom; they live within the magnificent workings of life.

"Sound breathes life—

without form it lives."

That moment of awakening was when these words became my motto. Fifty years ago, I had encountered Tolstoy's counsel: "The voice of conscience is the voice of God." To live with conscience had since been my inviolable creed, but from that moment forward "conscience" was replaced for me by "life."

Music—The Words of Life

If we are to submit to that which our lives seek—but what is this thing called life? The lives that we endeavor to live always face toward joy. If we allow wisdom to lead us, the results obtained are unnatural. If we adopt the innocent heart of a child, our lives—based on a foundation of love—will try to move toward the true, the good, and the beautiful. I believe that the Buddha's pronouncement, "Humans possess an intrinsic nature," expresses the same idea. I feel likewise about Mozart's heart, which has taught me that spontaneous love and joy transcend human sorrow. It was Thibaud who made me realize that this function of life

was precisely what I most cherish.

At the same time that humankind created the culture of the oral and written word, it also created the superlative culture we call music. Music is a language of life that transcends the oral and written word, a living art that should also be acknowledged for its mysteriousness, and therein lies its capacity to enthrall. Bach, Mozart, Beethoven . . . all of these composers are vividly alive within their music, powerfully speaking to our life forces, purifying us, elevating us, and offering us supreme joy and emotional depth.

He is as young as a boy and wise as an old man—never old-fashioned, never modern, carried to the grave and always alive. His smile, which was so human, still shines on us transfigured. . . .²

This is a passage from the pianist Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924) extolling Mozart for expressing in sound a grand, formless being comprised of his character and philosophy, as well as his sorrow, love, and exquisite heart.

Talent Education is Education Directed Toward Life

Nature imbues every creature with life. The workings of that life, or the force with which it endeavors to live, is far beyond human wisdom. Each and every person who becomes aware of this is compelled to esteem and value children, adults, and even himself more highly.

We are profoundly moved by Maestro Casals' performances. In turn, the performances of children have the capacity to make that very same Maestro cry and move large numbers of people to tears. These all constitute beautiful symphonies of pure human life. The hearts, senses, wisdom, and conduct of humans, not to mention the functioning of their internal organs and nerves—each of these comprises no more than a portion of the vigor with which we strive to live. Regardless of what it is that human

wisdom gropes for or discovers, we must not forget to understand human beings as a unitary force—that is to say, as all-inclusive entities that revolve around the workings of life.

Accordingly, my Talent Education had to be education directed toward life; or stated differently, a pedagogy for life-forces endeavoring to live.

Not to Teach but Foster



Why is it that every Japanese child develops with ease the superior ability to speak Japanese? That is where the secret of fostering human ability lies. When one does one's utmost to teach and motivate children, yet somehow the results are less than fruitful, then surely the approach used must be misdirected somehow. This feeling of mine derives from the experiences I have personally undergone, and the experimentation I have undertaken, in the last thirty years.

Educators everywhere have become overly absorbed with the idea that they are *teaching*; they have forgotten the reality that a child's life *develops* of its own accord. Moreover, such teachers have failed to inquire deeply into the process by which ability develops. In other words, they have made the mistake of

concentrating only on the *kyō* (teaching) part of *kyōiku* (education), forgetting about the *iku* (fostering) aspect, even though the latter is the very aim of education.

At the level of elementary education, too, teachers are guilty of educating in ways that neglect to *foster* their students. Instead, they educate so as to *teach*, after which they inflict test after test on their pupils, who are then evaluated solely on the basis of their test results: this child is outstanding, this child is middling, and this child was born slow-witted.

Tests, by nature, should not exist to rank students. Rather, I believe they should be conceived as surveys to ascertain the degree to which students have understood a given body of material, and to discover if any of them did not understand something. I submit that the function of any survey chart based on student answers should be to identify which questions might be throwing off children who are confused or unable to execute particular tasks.

Depending upon how you view them, children's report cards are teachers' report cards as well. In schools today, however, they have become nothing more than "children's report cards."

What is Accomplished Simply in Knowing What One Ought to Do?

Parents do not send a child to elementary school in order to have the child's *innate* qualities be evaluated through tests. Nonetheless, in actuality, these days it has come to seem as if human assessment, or the assessment of children through repeated tests, has become the job of the school, the result being that everyone is obsessed with rankings. I find this unacceptable.

I would like to see schools help each child, during her nine years of compulsory education, to cultivate and solidify her abilities, even if it should so happen that these are confined to a single subject or skill. Nine years should be

adequate for fostering in every child, at minimum, the splendor of having acquired at least one notable ability.

This ability does not even have to be in an academic subject. If, for example, education designed to foster a mindset and behavior based on "kindness to others" was carried out in everyday life at school, amidst friends, and at home, what a pleasant society Japan could create. However, the educational system today merely teaches children that they should "be kind to others." It therefore produces intellectuals who know full well that they "should be kind to others"—but who are, in reality, fostered to become nothing more than unfortunate egoists. The current state of society is borne of this sort of education.



I hope that we are able, in one way or another, through recognizing life as the source of children's development, to shift from education that teaches to education that fosters. This is why I have thrown my entire being into Talent Education. Stated differently, children have the capacity to develop in any way whatsoever, depending upon how they are fostered. May every child born on this earth develop into a decent and happy person, a human being with sought-after talents. I live always with this prayer, and stake my life on realizing it. I believe, moreover, that all children are born with the potential to respond to and fulfill this prayer.

Suzuki Shin'ichi, Ai ni ikiru (Nurtured by Love) (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1966). This translation is

excerpted from Suzuki Shin'ichi, Nurtured by Love, revised edition, trans. Kyoko Selden with Lili Selden (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Music Publishing, 2013).

SPECIAL FEATURE

Japan in Translation III In Honor of Kyoko Selden

Edited by Alisa Freedman

Artistic Legacy of the Fifteenth Century Selections from *Japan: The Shaping of Daimyo Culture, 1185-1868*, translated by Kyoko Selden

Nagai Kafū, Selections from “Ukiyo-e Landscapes and Edo Scenic Places,” translated by Kyoko Selden and Alisa Freedman

Cho Kyo, Selections from *The Search for the Beautiful Woman: A Cultural History of Japanese and Chinese Beauty*, translated by Kyoko Selden

Osaki Midori, *Wanderings in the Realm of the Seventh Sense*, translated by Kyoko Selden and Alisa Freedman

Three Heian Poems, translated with calligraphy by Kyoko Selden

Suzuki Shin'ichi (1898-1998) was the violinist, educator, philosopher and author who developed the Suzuki Method to teach children classical music as a means to enrich their lives while enhancing their motor skills, concentration, memory, and self-discipline.

Kyoko Selden (1936-2013) taught Japanese language and literature as a senior lecturer at Cornell University until her retirement in 2008. Author, translator, artist and calligrapher, she was the translation coordinator of the Asia-Pacific Journal. Her major works as translator centered on Japanese women writers, the atomic bomb, the Ainu and the Okinawans. Her major translations included *Japanese Women Writers: Twentieth Century Short Fiction*, *More Stories By Japanese Women Writers, An Anthology*, Kayano Shigeru's *Our Land Was a Forest*, Honda Katsuichi's *Harukor: Ainu Woman's Tale*, *The Atomic Bomb: Voices From Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, Shin'ichi Suzuki's *Nurtured by Love*, and Cho Kyo's *The Search for the Beautiful Woman, A Cultural History of Japanese and Chinese Beauty*.

Lili Selden is a freelance translator and editor.

Notes

¹ Teikoku Music Academy was founded in 1931 with Suzuki Shin'ichi as co-founder. The word *teikoku* means "the imperial state," but Teikoku Music Academy was a private school. The school was closed in 1944 because of war damage. Kunitachi Music Academy, now Kunitachi College of Music, was founded in 1926 as Tokyo Higher Academy of Music.

² From "Mozart: Aphorisms," a 1906 publication to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Mozart's birth. Ferruccio Busoni, *The Essence of Music and Other Papers*, trans. Rosamond Ley (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957).