

Board Meeting of the Board of Directors Carmel, Ca. Feb. 16, 1970

Tatsugami Roshi-

I enjoy everyone, seeds, of enthusiasm to practice zazen. Makes me happy. Enthusiasm of course is best thing to make me happy. I always mention before that you do best not to sit on the chair of such enthusiastic zazen. I want to teach Dogen's practice to spur your practice. There may be various people whose curiosity impels them to practice zazen at Tassajara. We have to be thinking of various kinds of people, different race of human being, with various thoughts. What is best most important basis to establish way of practice of Zen Buddhism at Tassajara. We will have to strive for establishing Tassajara Zen Monastery so as not to be tossed by various different types of human beings, different types of thought. At present our effort should be directed to make a fundamental foundation of way of Tassajara Zen Monastery.

It may be easier the amount of spirit of oriental people handing down Buddhism from India through China to Japan. They understand Buddhism and spread it to the people but the question is how the European people, and particularly American people accept the spirit of Buddhism. I wonder if they understand Buddhism properly. Important to do that and to spread Buddhism to American people. I am wondering- it may be a kind of danger to understand quickly the meaning of Buddhism. How do American people understand Buddhism properly. Through this experience they have to make up their own culture and the spirit of Buddhism they have understood- under the best conditions. According to Dogen's Buddhism - if you understand Dogen's Buddhism as a kind of thought - not important to understand Buddhism. Dogen's Buddhism is a vital aspect of human life, extended into daily life. Buddhism in daily life is specific character of Dogen's Buddhism.

Spirit of one's Buddhist life - minute, careful way of Buddhism. The way of scrupulous practice is not something to imagine as a substantial concept which exists in our daily life. Way is how to spread practice in minute detail into every step of our daily life. How do American people understand this point in their daily life. America is greatly free. So I hope the American Buddhism will develop on the basis of the spirit of freedom in the United States. What I want to tell you is how to make this progress in Buddhism, how to make progress at the present.

Suzuki Roshi

His (Tatsugami) point: it was easy for Japanese and Chinese to understand Buddhism because of similar culture, language, and background. For Buddhism to cross the Pacific is not so easy, because it is difficult, if we could understand Buddhism- the meaning will be greater. At the same time we will have a greater difficulty than the Chinese or Japanese to understand Buddhism. He doesn't give up because he acknowledges our sincerity in studying Buddhism. We will not give up. He feels quite sure about what we, as Americans, will understand of Buddhism-- but not so easy.

I have the same feeling. The more I stay here the more I see how difficult it is to understand "right understanding of Buddhism".- for you a great difficulty to accept it. Dogen's teaching. If it is too difficult then you may give up and take easy way. Then you will not understand real truth of Buddhism.

Dogen's teaching - making best effort in each moment, express your spirit in each moment and take care of things in each moment - point of Dogen's way. Not to achieve something immediately- not to be a kind of perfectionist. "If we do it what we do must be perfect" is not Dogen's way. We have to express Dogen's way. And this point can be easily lost. If Buddhism doesn't taste so good - we will want ice cream or wine.

Dogen's way to appreciate ice cream if it is given to us - whether we feel good or bad, make best effort and take care of everything as much as possible and be satisfied with what is given to us.

Why Tatsugami Roshi is so strict with instruction has to do with making best effort. Looks like Dogen's teaching was to give instruction in great complicated detail- not Dogen's way. How we can make best effort in each moment is Dogen's teaching- nature of his teaching is in everyday life,- not verbal teaching, not even in Shobogenzo. His kindness in making effort in everyday life is why he wrote so much. His instructions may be not for American people - but for Japanese people whose culture he knew so well. Understand his intention in giving his instructions. He acted as a priest and as a Japanese.

Maybe very difficult practice for you - way of treating things is quite different. Japanese things are very fragile. American things are very strong. So training of Dogen was given, developed Buddhism. (Which came first Dogen or Japanese Culture?)

Way of treating things as Japanese people do - I feel almost desperate. If you give up though Buddhism will not develop in this country. But if Buddhism does develop here something great will happen in America. Giving some new element which you didn't have. If so - something maybe wonderful will happen.

Students from Esalen who stayed at Tassajara for one week - described the experience they had - oryoki etc.- I was amazed. Maybe not so difficult. For you, give up peripheral idea, practice hard.- then some big event will happen. Not a matter of translating Shobogenzo.- how to hit han, how to sit zazen.

Tatsugami will help us- continue with his guidance.

Tatsugami says he should explain why we do this. Point will be how you understand his instruction. We've got to find out real practice in everyday practice otherwise zazen doesn't mean anything. We'll just end up with a zazen boom.

Peter is sitting with one leg down on altar. That is real menmitsuno-kafu, . How to take care of his zazen. How we express Dogen's spirit is the point.

For you no danger of being caught by form. In Japan easy to follow Dogen's form. So if someone is living without effort that's not the spirit of Dogen's way, spirit of Buddhism. Making best effort is the spirit.