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When we sit in this way our mind is calm and quite simple. But usually our mind is not so calm and our mind is very complicated. When we do something it is difficult to be concentrated on what we do and because, before we do (something) we think and when we think the thinking leaves some trace, and the thinking not only leave some trace but also it will give us some particular notion to do something. That notion makes our activity very complicated. When we do something quite simple we have no notion, but when we do something difficult, or when we do something in relation to others...other people, or in society, we will have many convenient idea for ourselves, and that makes activity very complicated.

In America...American people in this point, I think are very good. You are much simpler in your way of...when you do something you have very good attitude in what you do, but usually we have double or triple notion in one activity. That makes it very difficult to be concentrated on one activity because we have...you know...to be concentrated on one activity because we have...you know...we want to catch too many birds. So you will catch any bird because you want to try to catch too many birds. We say, to catch two birds by one stone. That is usual activity. That kind of thinking, we say, is to have shadow of thinking. Shadow is not...you are not thinking actually. Your thinking is divided in many ways that means you have shadow of the activity or the thinking or you will have trace of the thinking.

We have to think but we should not have the trace of the thinking. Trace of the thinking—even if it is one trace, it is not good because you will be attached to the trace. This is what you may say, “This is what I have done”, but actually it is not so. When we...in our recollection you may say, “I did such and such thing in some certain way” but actually it is not so, and when you think in that way you limit the actual experience of what you have done. So if you attach to the idea about what you have done that will create some selfish idea. So usually what you have done is always good but it is not actually so.

When we become old we are very proud of what we have done. That is...when others listen to us saying something proudly; others will feel funny or may not feel so good because his interpretation...his recollection is one-sided. They know that is not actually what he did. Moreover, he, himself will be proud of what he did and that pride will create some problem for him while he is repeating what his idea is. His personality will be twisted more and more until he becomes quite a disagreeable person. It means to leave trace of the thinking or activity. We should not forget what we did but we should not have trace. It is a different matter to leave trace, what I mean, and to remember something in its true sense is quite different matter. It is necessary to remember what we did but we should not have...we should not attach to what we have done in some special sense.

That is so-called attachment or trace of activity. So we should not have any trace of the activity or we should not have any shadow of the activity.

When we do something we should do it with our whole body and mind. You should be concentrated on what you do and when you do something you should do it completely –like a good bonfire. It should not be smoky. You should burn yourself completely. You should not be smoky fire. That is one thing. If you do not burn yourself completely you will have trace of yourself in what you did. It means you do not change it into ashes completely. You have something remaining without completely burned down or burned out. That is so-called ‘zen activity’. This is the goal of our practice. That is what it means by ‘ash does not come back to firewood’. Ash is ash. Ash should be completely ash. The firewood should be firewood. If this kind of activity takes place, one activity covers everything. This is the goal of our practice.

So our practice is not matter of one hour or two hours; or one day or one year. Even for a moment you practice zazen with your whole body and mind. That is zazen. So moment after moment you should devote yourself to your practice. You should not have any remains after you do something; but it does not mean to forget all about it. If you understand this point all the dualistic thinking or all the problems in you life will be vanished because you have no idea of duality. When you practice zen you become one with zen. There’s no ‘you’ or no ‘zazen’. When you bow there is no Buddha or no you. One complete bow...bowing takes place, that’s all. That is Nirvana, or attainment, perfect attainment.

When Buddha transmitted our practice to Mahajuna he picked up a flower. He just picked up a flower with smiling...with a smile. And all the...only Mahajuna understood what he meant but the rest of the people didn’t understand. We don’t know if this is historical event or not but it means something. It means our traditional way. Some activity which covers everything is true activity and that activity, that secret of this activity, is transmitted from Buddha to us. That is zen school not some teaching taught by him but not rules of life which was set up by Buddha. This teaching, or the rules, should be changed according to the country or according to the place or according to the people who observe it, but this secret of the practice cannot be changed. It is always so and we should live in this way always because in Buddhism we have no idea of the world which is completely different from this world. The old world is the extension of this world. The future world should be extension of our present world and our past life should result in this present life. That is how we believe in truth. Truth is not something which is beyond our reach. Truth should be always here.

So there is, for us there is no other way to live in this world and I think this is quite true and this is at least more acceptable...easy to accept...easy to understand and easy to practice it. In comparison to this kind of life, if you think what is happening to this world, or to human society you will find out how true the truth Buddha left us. The truth is quite simple and practice is quite simple, but

even though it is quite simple we should not ignore it. If you...we should find out great value in this simple truth. Usually, if it is too simple..."Oh, I know that. It is quite simple. Everyone knows that." But if you do not find its value it means nothing. It is the same thing as not knowing. The more you understand our culture, the more you understand how true our teaching is. So for the people who are attached to our culture too much it is better to be critical of our culture. It means you are coming back to the simple truth left by Buddha. But our approach is just concentrated on simple practice and simple understanding of life, but for someone it is necessary to criticize our culture. There are two approaches. But anyway, we should not attach to some fancy idea to beautiful things. We should not seek for something good. The truth is always near at hand, within your reach.

Did you understand?

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