

Rev S. Suzuki
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It's been a pretty long time since I saw you. I am still studying hard to find out what is our way. Recently I reached the conclusion that there is no Buddhism or there is no Zen or anything. Yesterday, when I was preparing for the evening lecture (in San Francisco) although I tried to find out something to talk about, I couldn't find out anything so I was just reading. And I thought of the story which I was told in Obun Festival when I was young. The story is about the water or the story is about the people in Hell.

Although they have water, the people in Hell cannot drink it because the water burns like a fire, or water which they want to drink looks like blood, so they cannot take it. While the celestial beings...for the celestial beings it is jewel and for the fish it is their home and for the human being it is water. You may think, if you think water is water (if you understand that water is water, as we do) is right understanding the water sometimes looks like...although water sometimes looks like jewel or house or blood or fire that is not real water...you may think in this way. As you think that zazen practice is real practice and the rest of the everyday activities is the application of zazen, but this (zazen) is fundamental practice. But Dogen zenji, amazingly said, 'Water is not water'. If you think water is water your understanding is not much different from the understanding of fish's understanding, and hungry ghost's understanding of water, or angel's understanding of water. There is not much difference between our understanding and their understanding.

Then what is our zazen? Or what is water? This may be another...the next question you will have; if zazen is not zazen, what is that which we are practicing everyday? This will be the next question. Here Dogen-zenji says, 'This is Buddha's activity, some activity which was given to you.' Tentatively the water is not water actually; it is something which was given to you. Our practice is not something which you can understand because it is something which is given to you. You didn't make it; you did not invent it; you did not practice zazen through and through. But the reason why you can practice it is just because it was something which was given to you. So this practice is possible because Buddha gave this practice to us. So there is no reason why we do not know what it is, but because it was given to us we have to receive it, we have to accept it. That is just why we practice zazen.

Now, if you understand our way in this way whatever you do that is the gift for you, something which was given to you, and which is something, which you should accept; because you cannot accept anything, and you cannot chose anything you have no chance to accept things when it was given to you. Even though there are various treasures, if they are not given to you, you cannot accept them. And the way to accept it is to accept it when it is given to you. You cannot say, 'I will accept it tomorrow'. You cannot say, 'I can accept it yesterday'. The only way is to accept it right now, when it was given to you, then tomorrow something new will be given to you. So, day by day, we practice our way, as a gift. And we accept it when it is given to us. So there is no wonder that the same gift Buddha gives us everything according to the people and the situation... when they are in Hell the gift will be fire. For celestial beings the gift will be the jewel. For fish gift will be the house. And there may be many kinds

of gifts from Buddha, according to the people, according to the nature of people. In this way, when you understand our way in this way there is no problem and this is the way to practice our way.

This is the real gift from Buddha; not only water but also mountain is a gift. So that mountain is not always mountain. To us it is mountain but to a bird it is their home. There may be various merits or virtues of the mountain, so (Fuyo Dokei zenji?) says, ‘The east mountain flowing and the river stays.’ Water stays and mountain flows. We think mountain is something which is always staying in some certain place, but there may be some who understand the mountain...that there may be some person who sees the mountain flowing and water staying. Because it is something which was given to us, that gift is not something, is not only just something which we see. It looks like something like mountain, or water, or cake, or something else. It looks like so. But we don’t know exactly what it is. So before we understand what it is, the only way is to accept it and to practice it. That is actually true practice, or else you cannot practice our way. Even though you have complete Zendo you cannot practice.

At Tassajara we have a very difficult time to practice our way. For almost one year we are trying very seriously to practice our way and the more we make our effort to practice our way, we are involved in big problems. You can see what we are doing at Tassajara. There are more than forty people and they each have their own understanding of Zen, ore or less. “This is Zen”. “This is Zen”. That is the trouble. Because you practice zazen you cannot practice; you cannot have Tassajara. Even though they are there they cannot do it. Why? Because they practice zazen. So I think the best way is not to practice zazen...(laughter). Just to live in Tassajara, like a

bird. Then you can practice zazen. Birds or badgers know what is zazen better than students in Tassajara. This happens, actually, because we understand water is something to drink, the water is not something to live in, this kind of one-sided understanding of our way creates many problems. So, at Tassajara, there is Tassajara's way; here in Los Altos there is your own way; as a gift. And the only way to practice it is to receive it, just to receive it when it is given to you.

This is very important point. Even though I say so to have....to make our effort to find out what is real practice is not in vain and I am so grateful for students in Tassajara, and the students who practice in Los Altos, in the Bay Area, and recently at Mill Valley, too. They are making a big effort. And we are now in the state to find out the real meaning of our practice. After making a big effort to find out what is zazen we are finding out what is...we almost find out what is true zazen. And why we should practice our way in this cross-legged position like Buddha did, and the understanding of our practice which was given to us by Buddha.

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