

69-12-21.A [69-12-21-A]

**FUNDAMENTAL BUDDHIST POINT:  
TO ADJUST OURSELVES TO OUR SURROUNDINGS**

**December 21, 1969. San Francisco.**

Since I moved in this building, people ask me how do you feel. But I haven't found myself in this building. I don't know what I am doing here. Everything is so unusual to me so actually I haven't much feeling, but I am thinking about now how to adjust myself to this building and first of all what I felt, seeing people, seeing our students bowing in this way or cleaning our building, I found special meaning of putting, putting hands together like this. Wherever we are, this putting hands together is very suitable posture. You know, this is pretty universal way of expressing our sincerity, I think. So wherever we are, if our behavior is based on this putting together, we will be beautiful wherever we are. And our-we will suit to the surrounding. As a Buddhist, I think fundamental Buddhist way is, I think, how to, you know, adjust myself, ourselves to the surrounding, rather than changing our surround. So when I think Buddhists moved in, when Buddhists which was developed in eastern culture, moved in western culture, if possible as much as possible without changing the furniture or building, how to adjust ourselves to the building or the culture will be the most important work for us. I think in that way now. This is, maybe, basic difference between western culture and eastern culture. For instance, you use very convenient chair, like this. But we sit on floor without using convenient things. Maybe this is more convenient, but if we can live in our idea maybe...I realize this point, when we...instead of making surrounding convenient for us, we make effort to find some way to live in the surrounding, on the floor or on the earth by effort to live on the earth. So it is rather difficult. Maybe it is rather difficult to stand up from the floor. This is rather difficult and it may be difficult to eat with table, rather take everything up to your mouth, maybe. But this is , but even though it is difficult we eastern people trying to find our way without changing our surrounding, without using some special tools.

When I was sitting here, reciting sutra, seeing those chairs in front of me, I thought "Oh, very convenient things, those chairs." But if we can live without chair our life will be more simple and even thought we use our physical power, physical strength in standing up, but we will have eventually more and more physical strength and physical power to suit our surrounding. But...we must, but when-if we sue something, we must limit things in smallest amount. That will be the next thing to think and if we must know how to best use of them. Dogen Zenji said-"something which you put higher place, you should put higher place. Something you should put lower place, you should put lower place or on the floor." So something should be on the shelf and something should be on the floor. This is, maybe, next thing we should think and we should take care of. We should put things in the most natural way and next thing will be to clean our surrounding. This is very important effort to fit ourselves to our surrounding. At Eiheiiji they say-zazen-they do not say zazen first, they say cleaning first and then zazen. Clean our surrounding, making suitable surrounding for us, then we should sit. So cleaning first and zazen next.

I think it makes sense. I didn't know the meaning so well, but for instance, it is rather difficult to sit before you, clean your floor, and altar. It is not so easy because you will have various dust in your mind too. So in Zen student, most important thing is to arrange things in proper way or in the most natural way, so that we can make best of our effort and best of use of them and to clean it, to clean them so that we can have good practice. Then I think without changing, you know, our way of life so much we will have quite Buddhistic feeling in our life I think.

So fundamental point may be to make effort to suit ourselves to the surroundings, to adjust ourselves to the surrounding, instead of adjusting the surrounding to convenience. This kind of effort is right now very important I think. And if we start to making effort on this point we will have wonderful life and this building will be, without changing so much, I think we will have quite good Buddhistic feeling. I want, you know, best effort to adjust myself to your culture instead of changing my way of bow, instead of bow to shake hand or something like that. Instead of doing that kind, but by some fundamental way, we will have something wonderful I think. I haven't-I didn't-I haven't studied Dogen's work on this point yet in its true sense. Of course what we are doing at Eihei-ji is based on Dogen's instruction about our life. But if we study it in America, I think we will have something new meaning to it, as he was very careful about our life and view of life and way of life. I will ask someone to study from-with some new viewpoint.

EZT – early SFZC transcript – 69-12-21-A

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