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PRACTICE TO BE LIKE A STONE

by

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Before we sat, a six day sesshin was too long but after we completed it, it was too short. I think that you now feel quite a different feeling. For instance, when you walk, you have quite a different feeling. You feel as if your legs have become shorter, and your legs stick to the floor, and you feel very heavy when you walk. It should be a great joy for you when you have completed such a long sesshin, but you know, the strange thing is that you don't have so much joy. I think that is because you have more composure in your feeling. And this is, I think, important.

A Zen student is not very expressive. Mostly they keep silent, they do not walk so fast, they don't move so actively. They have some ...something...anyway, something different. Especially when you sit for such a long time, you yourself feel that you have changed a lot. You feel as if it is difficult even to smile, even to say something. That will be the feeling you have. And, if you continue your practice, you will be more and more this way. And even though you will not change into a strong Buddha, a great change will happen to you, and you will become someone whom you don't like at all. "I don't want to be like this." Although this kind of experience is not the experience you wanted to have, this is the experience you will have anyway. Through (laughs) zazen.

But there is no need for you to worry. Because this is the way upwards, and soon you will discover the way downwards, and you will find yourself in the city again as a normal person. So there is nothing to worry about, but in the zendo it is necessary for us to have this kind of experience through practice. And I think we must devote ourselves to this kind of practice for one or two years. Even more so if you go to Tassajara. Tassajara, itself, will more and more have the feeling of a practice center. When you see this kind of practice, you may say, or people may say, "Zazen practice is not for us." You may not like it. But by the time you have an old Caucasian Zen master, you will have found out exactly what Zen is.

I want you to be patient enough to continue this kind of practice. It is important for you to take care of this kind of feeling and gradually extend this kind of imperturbability of mind to our everyday life. When you start to work on this point, to establish, to extend your practice to everyday life, you will understand the teaching, our teaching.

I want you to keep doing this kind of practice for more than two years, at least. Practice to be like a stone. Actually, you know, in this training period, in this sesshin, I

found several students who have almost changed into a stone--almost, not quite. I think that is a good attainment, good progress to sit like a stone. But we do not practice our way in order to actually be a stone. That is what will happen to some students, not all of you. The way we practice zazen is different according to the personality of each person. But what will we attain is the same.

As a Zen teacher, there is no special image. We have various kinds of teachers, but they all have some quality as a Zen teacher. They are almost the same, but they do not lose their individual character. So it is not possible to understand Zen by observing in a hasty way. I think it may take a pretty long time before people in this land understand what Zen is. But Zen has a long, long history and we have many good teachers who could be a good example for us. Being encouraged by those teachers, we are practicing our way, and we are helping ourselves. As you are practicing hard here, and at Tassajara and at some other Zen centers, more and more good teachers will appear. I'm quite sure about it. I want you to practice our way as you are doing right now.

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