

EPILOGUE

I am so glad to see you again. Although I have only been gone two weeks, it seems a much longer time. Saturday and Sunday I led a two-day sesshin in Northampton. On Thursday I gave lectures at Smith College. I went to New York and saw many people. At the Community Church I gave a lecture, and there were seven hundred people in the audience. I was rather amazed. I could not start my lecture because people were constantly coming in; we had to wait until all of them were seated. I laughed; they must have thought D.T. Suzuki was speaking!

I saw many people and many business men who were interested in zen. I am quite sure that we can pay for the Tassajara land, but that is not what concerns me so much. I feel a big responsibility in mangging the temple and organizing our practice in that monastery. To establish right practice in America is the most important point. Although we are paying alot of money for the land, we do not gain anything. We are not so much interested in the ownership of the land, but in practicing our way as we want to practice it. To do so, in this situation alot of money must be payed. It can't be helped.

The land itself belongs to heaven and earth. No one can possess it. Everything is in flowing change; nothing exists but momentarily in its present form and color. There is nothing to be possessed in this world

of constant change. One thing flows into another and cannot be grasped. Before the rain stops we hear the bird; even under the heavy snow we see snowdrops and some growth coming up. In the East I saw rhubarb already. In Japan, late in the spring, we eat cucumbers. In this way, everything is changing, and sometimes it is nice to feel the change of things. But if we realize what we are doing in this evanescent life, we become rather ashamed of ourselves. In this changing life, we cannot repeat the same thing again. If we miss this moment, we become older.

each At Eihei-ji we have general house cleaning on ^{of the month} the third and eighth day; the third, eighth, thirteenth, eighteenth, twenty-third, twenty-eighth. These days are for cleaning. After cleaning our rooms and corridors, we put on clean white tabis (Japanese slippers), and form a row on each side of the passage in front of the zendo. As soon as we make two perfect rows the abbot of Eihei-ji comes. He is now ninety-four years old. * He appears with a stick, and we hear it thumping along the corridors all the way from his room. It may take more than fifteen minutes for him to come down to the zendo. He comes slowly, and we hear the sound of the stick while we are waiting. When at last he stands in front of us, this gatha (a kind

* Abbot Taisen KUMAZAWA ^{Archbishop of Eihei-ji} passed away in ~~December, 1967.~~

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of short poem) is recited. It says, " Since our great sage Buddha passed away, already nearly two thousand four hundred and fifty years have gone by. If today passes, our life will become shorter. We are like fish in a small pond. In its true sense, there cannot be any worldly pleasure in life. We must study more. Our practice should be like a man with his head on fire, trying to extinguish the fire. "

That was the most impressive moment of the day for me. We cleaned our rooms very hard. This is the way we should practice zazen. When our practice is based on this kind of understanding of life, that practice is pure practice, untainted by any gaining idea.

Someone told me that ^{soon} by 1970, fifty percent of our population will be under twenty-five years of age. Fifty percent of the people under twenty-five ! I think a big change will come in our society. This is the time when we should think more about what we should do. But before we do something, or before we think something, we should reflect on our life in the most strict way. If we are not strict enough with ourselves, what we do, what we think, and what we hope will not work. We should not be too optimistic or too pessimistic. How we understand the truth that everything changes is the most important point. We should study this truth from various sides and in various ways. To study this

truth is to be
faithful to the teaching, and to be faithful to our life.

When I was coming back from the East in the plane I sat near a young boy in a Navy uniform and his mother. After talking with her boy the mother felt very sad; she didn't know what to say, so she just covered her face with a newspaper and tried to sleep. But I don't think she was sleeping. Her boy was quite a skinny boy, and his belt was too large for him. He kept tapping his hand with the end of his belt. I could not say anything. I tried to say something to him, but I had no words. This kind of thing happens all over. ~~Last night I visited a Japanese family who lost their boy in Vietnam. Yesterday I saw a girl who was talking about the Vietnam policy with endless tears in her eyes. She works in a book store, and she said many books on zen and yoga are stolen, so she was told to be careful. But she thinks that the books are taken because many people want to read something which will help them understand the great problems of life. Something should be done about the world's critical ^{great} ^{PROBLEMS} situation. But we should avoid a hasty understanding of ^{THESE PROBLEMS} the situation. Before we think, before we act, we should reflect more about our human life. This is the most important point, I think. And it is the first step into the study of Buddhism.~~

NOTE: THINK ALTERNATING RET...